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Tearmoon Empire

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With the Right Connections, Anything's Possible!

Tearmoon Empire

Chapter 1
LUNATEAR—CAPITAL OF THE TEARMOON EMPIRE
MURMUR
THE ONE AND ONLY IMPERIAL PRINCESS—MIA LUNA TEARMOON, 20 YEARS OLD.
ROOOOAR
ROAR
HOW...?
HOW DID IT COME TO THIS?

THIS IS FOR THE EMPIRE.
GRAB
NOW, BE A GOOD PRINCESS...
WHAM
...AND DIE.
ROOOOAR
HOW?
KILL 'ER!
OFF WITH HER HEAD!
NOW!
HOW?
ROAR
ROOOOAR

HOW...

...DID IT COME...

SHING

SHING

SHING

LONG LIVE...

...THE TEARMOON EMPIRE!

...TO...

SKWICH!

P A F F

SEEP

SWOOSH
AAAAAAAH!
M-M-MY HEAD!
MY HEAD, MY HEAD, MY HEEEAD!
PAT
ぺたぺた
PAT
I-IT'S STILL THERE! IT'S OKAY. I'M OKAY.
ITTY-BITTY
...HM?

HUH?

I LOOK SO YOUNG...

NO, WAIT...

I REALLY AM YOUNG AGAIN?

FLOOSH

LET'S SEE... WHEN I WAS 17, THE EMPIRE WAS OVERTHROWN BY THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMY...

WHAT IN THE MOONS IS GOING ON?

I TRIED TO FLEE, BUT I WAS CAPTURED...

...AND CONFINED TO A DUNGEON FOR THREE YEARS.

AND THEN...

CHOP

SHUDDER

CHOP

BMP!

THERE'S SIMPLY NO WAY ANY OF THAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED!

OHO HO HO HO

FWUMP

BUT I CAN HARDLY BE MUCH OLDER THAN TEN... IT MUST HAVE ALL BEEN A TERRIBLY LONG DREAM!

...

THIS BOOK...

FLIP

GULP...

THIS IS MY DIARY, ISN'T IT?

BUT IT LOOKS AWFULLY OLD AND WORN...

I CAN'T TAKE THIS! I CAN'T! I DON'T WANT TO DIE! I DON'T WANT TO DIE! I DON'T WANT—

WHAT DID I DO WRONG? WAS IT WHEN I LAUGHED AND SAID THAT IF THE PEOPLE HAD NO BREAD, THEN LET THEM EAT MEAT? WHEN I SLAPPED THE DAUGHTER OF A POOR NOBLE TO GET EVEN AFTER I WAS REJECTED? WHEN I FIRED A COOK BECAUSE HE TRIED TO FEED ME A LOATHSOME VEGETABLE?

THE DAY OF MY EXECUTION IS NEARLY HERE. I'M TO BE DRAGGED TO THE GUILLOTINE AND BEHEADED— I KNOW IT. I'M SCARED. I'M SCARED! I'M SO, SO SCARED! I DON'T WANT TO DIE! PLEASE, SOMEBODY SAVE ME!

BEEP

THUD

AAAAAH!

WHITEMOON PALACE— THE WHITE NIGHT DINING HALL

Today's meal is...

GLOOM

UGH...

I FEEL ABYSMAL...

Bloodstained

UGH!

OF COURSE I WOULD, AFTER SEEING SOMETHING LIKE THAT...

...

?

AH, NO!

NOTHING OF THE...

PRINCESS MIA?

IS SOMETHING THE MATTER, YOUR HIGHNESS?

COULD THIS MEAN IT WASN'T A DREAM AFTER ALL?

AN UTTERLY PREPOSTEROUS REASON.

HE REFUSED TO STOP SERVING A VEGETABLE I DETESTED, SO I FLEW INTO A RAGE AND SACKED HIM.

ABOUT TWO YEARS FROM NOW, I BELIEVE.

I DO BELIEVE THIS MAN IS THE HEAD CHEF I HAD FIRED, IS HE NOT?

YOUR MEAL IS GETTING COLD, YOUR HIGHNESS...

IS SOMETHING STUCK TO MY FACE?

チラ GLANCE

IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND AS TO REMOVE MY STEW FROM THE TABLE...

I'M AFRAID I HAVEN'T MUCH OF AN APPETITE AT THE MOMENT.

I WOULD NOT.

HITA-

HOW VERY NOSTALGIC!

A STEW, ABSOLUTELY LADEN WITH AMBERMOON TOMATOES!

DA!

CLINK

BUT THEN AGAIN...

...NOW THAT I LOOK AT IT...

...

THIS IS PRECISELY WHY I HAD THIS MAN FIRED.

YOUR MEALS ARE CAREFULLY PLANNED WITH NUTRITION IN MIND, YOUR HIGHNESS. PLEASE TRY NOT TO BE PICKY.

...

...IT MIGHT NOT BE TOO TERRIBLE...

SHOCK

NOM

IT CAN'T BE...

YOU MEAN TO SAY THAT THIS—*THIS* IS MADE FROM AMBERMOON TOMATOES?

THE TOMATOES I SO VERY LOATHED...?

YIKES

ヒィ!!

CHEF!

Y-YES?!

IT'S AMBERMOON TOMATO STEW, YOUR HIGHNESS...

WHAT... WHAT IN THE MOONS IS THIS?!

...A DELICACY BEYOND COMPARE!

THIS IS...

THE VEGETABLES PRACTICALLY MELT AWAY THE MOMENT THEY ENTER MY MOUTH...

IT HAS A REFRESHING, ACIDIC BITE BUT WITH A SUBTLE AND PROFOUND SWEETNESS HIDDEN BENEATH...

SPARKLE キラキラ

SPARKLE キラ

SPARKLE キラ

SPARKLE キラ

MUMBLE
ぽつ…

HAS...

PARDON?

WATER! WE NEED WATER, STAT!

Y-YOUR HIGHNESS, PLEASE, SLOW DOWN!

MUNCH
もぐ

SCARF
ぱく

NOM

DRIP
ぽた

HAS BREAD...

...ALWAYS BEEN THIS SOFT?

EAT UP!

SMACK

YOU'LL HAVE TO MAKE DO WITH THIS!

CRAM

MMPH!

AHH, WHAT A DAMN WASTE...

LOOK, PRINCESS! IT'S YOUR FAVORITE FOOD! AN AMBERMOON TOMATO!

CHOKE

COUGH

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

PANIC
あせ

PANIC
あせっ

NO...

Y-Y-YOUR HIGHNESS?

IS SOMETHING THE MATTER WITH MY COOKING?

GULP

TO THINK YOU WOULD PREPARE SUCH A DELECTABLE FEAST, JUST FOR ME... I COMMEND YOU.

I AM TRULY SATISFIED, CHEF.

HE MORMURS

SOMETHING MUST BE WRONG WITH HER! IS SHE ILL?!

THE SELFISH PRINCESS HERSELF, EXPRESSING GRATITUDE?!

SHOCK

WHA?!

?

M-M-MUCH OBLIGED, YOUR HIGHNESS!

SHUT UP, YOU TWO!

WHISPER

WHAT'S NEXT? FLYING PIGS...?

WHISPER

SO LONG AS YOU PAY ATTENTION TO THE FLAME, IT'S A DISH ANYONE COULD MAKE.

...THE TOMATOES IN THIS DISH WERE SIMPLY STEWED OVER A PERIOD OF THREE DAYS.

INDEED. WHILE AMBERMOON TOMATOES MAY BE UN-PLEASANTLY ASTRINGENT IF NOT PREPARED PROPERLY...

MY, IS THAT SO?

HOWEVER, IF TODAY'S MEAL PLEASES YOU, IT'S BECAUSE THE INGREDIENTS THEMSELVES WERE DELICIOUS. MY SKILLS HAD LITTLE TO DO WITH IT.

BOW

AS VASSALS OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY, IT IS OUR SOLEMN DUTY TO SAFEGUARD YOUR HIGHNESS'S HEALTH.

NAY, TO OMIT VEGETABLES FROM YOUR DIET WOULD DEPRIVE YOU OF VITAL NUTRIENTS.

IT'S TRULY THAT SIMPLE?

THREE DAYS OF ATTENTION SEEMS LIKE QUITE A LOT OF EFFORT. WHY NOT SPARE YOURSELF THE TROUBLE?

...HARDLY ANYONE SHOWED ME SUCH CONCERN AFTER THE EMPIRE FELL.

IN MY DREAM... IF THAT'S WHAT IT TRULY WAS...

COME TO THINK OF IT...

I'M AFRAID I HAVEN'T THE FAINTEST IDEA WHAT A COMMONER'S MONTHLY SALARY WOULD...

?

OH...?

PERHAPS WHAT YOU'RE TASTING IS SIMPLY THE VALUE OF THE INGREDIENTS...

AND OF COURSE, PREPARING THIS MEAL COSTS AS MUCH AS A TYPICAL COMMONER'S MONTHLY SALARY.

...AMOUNT...

...TO...

ボヤア LOOM!!!

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MUCH IT COSTS...

...TO FEED YOU ROYALS?

...

HM?!

IT SEEMS THOSE TEN YEARS REALLY WERE JUST A DREAM...

BUT WHOSE DETESTABLE VOICE CAME TO MY MIND JUST NOW?

IT FEELS AS IF I'M FORGETTING SOMETHING... SOMETHING OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE.

OH, MAIDS?

CLAP CLAP

YES, YOUR HIGHNESS.

FETCH ME SOMETHING SWEET, WOULD YOU?

DING

OF COURSE! SWEETS!

JUST THE THING FOR TIMES LIKE THIS!

Hmm...

ACHOO

COULD IT BE?!

I-IS THAT?!

C-C-CAKE!

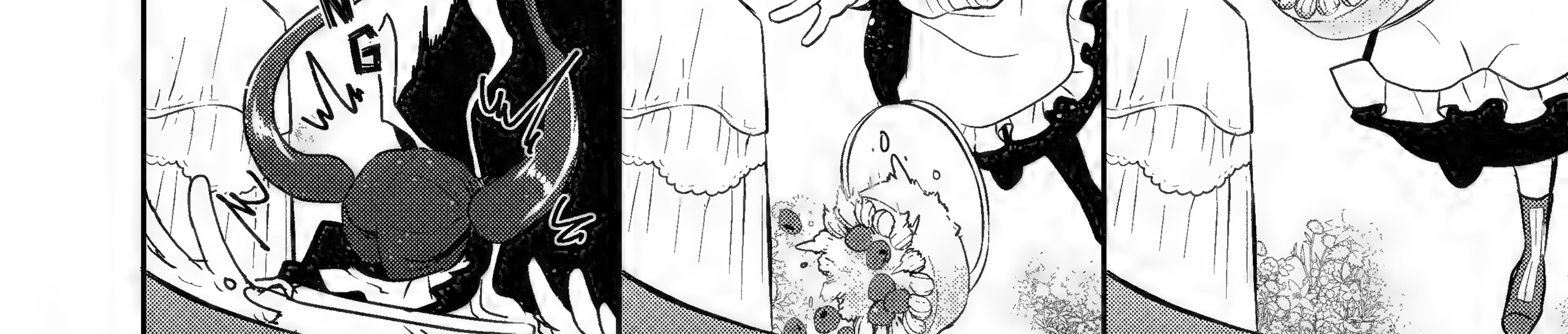
OH, HOW TERRIBLY LONG IT'S BEEN SINCE I'VE HAD CAKE!

TH-THANK YOU FOR WAITING, YOUR HIGH—

—NESS!

TMP

CLAANG



TWITCH

NO, NOT IN THE LEAST. THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONCERN.

HUH?!

OUR SINCEREST APOLOGIES, YOUR HIGHNESS! ARE YOU INJURED?

HOR-

WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE YOU DOING?!

ROR

SHE'S NOT MAD? IS THIS REALLY THE SAME PRINCESS MIA...?

I'M TERRIBLY SORRY, YOUR HIGHNESS...

NEVER MIND THE CAKE. JUST BRING ME ANOTHER, AND ALL WILL BE WELL.

MORE IMPORTANTLY, I DO HOPE THE GIRL IS ALL RIGHT?

A FROTHING RAGE.

BARK BARK BARK BARK BARK BARK

YOU!

ON YOUR KNEES, NOW!

...BUT THAT WAS THE ONLY CAKE WE HAD ON HAND TODAY.

EEEK!

ダーダダダダダ

TMP TMP TMP TMP TMP

LOOK AT ME! LET ME SEE YOUR FACE!

M-MY CAKE! HOW DARE YOU?!

IT'S THE SAME PRINCESS MIA AFTER ALL.

TREMBLE

AH

I-I'M SO SORRY...

YOU'RE...

PRINCESS MIA?

I'VE COME TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR HAIR!

THE DAY OF MIA'S EXECUTION.

ANNE...

...

TUG

I'M SO SORRY, YOUR HIGHNESS.

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN SO CLUMSY WITH A COMB...

WHY...?

WHY ARE YOU...

...STILL SO DEVOTED TO ME?

YOU DID HIT ME A LOT IN THE PAST, YES.

I THINK YOU EVEN KICKED ME A FEW TIMES.

I'VE DONE NOTHING TO DESERVE THIS KINDNESS FROM YOU.

FAR FROM IT...

YOU COME HERE DAY AFTER DAY...

...JUST TO TAKE CARE OF ME.

BUT YOU KNOW WHAT, PRINCESS MIA?

IS THAT TRUE?

YEP! THEY WERE NOTHING COMPARED TO THE FIGHTS I USED TO HAVE WITH MY BROTHERS.

HEE HEE!

YOUR KICKS NEVER HURT ME ONE BIT!

HUH...?

THERE'S REALLY NO DEEPER REASON TO IT THAN THAT.

THE REASON I KEEP TAKING CARE OF YOU, YOUR HIGHNESS...

...IS THAT I CAN'T LEAVE YOU ALONE. THAT'S ALL.

IT'S TIME. GET OUT.

!

ALL I CAN SAY...

...IS THANK YOU.

THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO TO REWARD YOUR DEVOTION. NOT ANYMORE.

CHEAP GRATITUDE IS THE MOST I CAN OFFER.

PLEASE, FORGIVE ME.

FWMPH

ﾐｭｰ

MAY THE GODS SMILE UPON YOU...

...PRINCESS MIA.

I PRAY THAT THEY GRANT YOU THEIR BLESSING.

!

I...

...REMEMBER NOW.

ANNE.

KNEEL

SILENCE!

YOUR HIGHNESS, YOU MUSTN'T!

YOU'LL GET CREAM ON YOUR—

I-I-I'M SO SORRY, YOUR HIGHNESS!

BWEH

IT'S ALL RIGHT.

MY, BUT I'M NOT EVEN ANGRY!

THIS TIME...
I CAN FINALLY
REPAY YOU FOR
YOUR LOYALTY.

Y-YES!

UMM...

THANK
YOU
VERY
MUCH...

NOW,
ON YOUR
FEET.

YOU'RE
QUITE
CERTAIN
YOU
AREN'T
HURT?

HENCEFORTH,
YOU SHALL BE
MY PERSONAL
MAID-IN-WAITING.

MY DAILY
AFFAIRS ARE
YOURS TO
MANAGE.

WHA?

HORROR

YOUR HIGHNESS?!

OH?
I DO BELIEVE
YOU ARE THE
ONE ACTING
IMPROPERLY—
TOWARD POOR
ANNE!

FLUSTER FLUSTER

I-IF I MAY, YOUR HIGHNESS, THIS GIRL IS AS CLUMSY AND CARELESS AS CAN BE! THERE'S NO TELLING HOW IMPROPERLY SHE MIGHT ACT...

I TRUST YOU WILL ALL THINK LONG AND HARD ABOUT WHAT THAT MEANS!

AS OF THIS MOMENT, ANNE IS MY MAID-IN-WAITING!

THEREFORE, SHE IS UNDER MY DIRECT PROTECTION!

GRIN

I AM NOW CERTAIN.

PANIC

PANIC

PANIC

Y-YOUR HIGHNESS...?

THOSE MEMORIES WERE NO MERE DREAM.

THIS IS A TALE OF SECOND CHANCES.

AND THAT MEANS...

I REMEMBER ANNE'S KINDNESS ALL TOO CLEARLY. I REMEMBER THE WARMTH OF HER ARMS.

A TALE OF HOW MIA, WHO'D REVERTED TO THE AGE OF TWELVE, RAN HERSELF RAGGED TO AVERT THE FUTURE FORETOLD IN HER TIMEWORN DIARY.

WOULD SHE DO IT TO SAVE HER DOOMED EMPIRE?

OR TO SPARE THE MYRIAD OF SOLDIERS WHOSE LIVES WOULD BE CLAIMED BY CIVIL WAR?

NO. MIA HAD BUT ONE OBJECTIVE, AND ONE OBJECTIVE ALONE.

TO DELIVER HER PEOPLE FROM THE UPCOMING FAMINE?

IT WAS ALL FOR THE SAKE OF AVERTING HER GRISLY FATE AT THE BLADE OF THE GUILLOTINE!

CLENCH

Tearmoon Empire

Chapter 2

THE WHITEMOON PALACE GRAND LIBRARY

HMM...

WHAT TO DO ABOUT THIS?

IT WAS WRITTEN BY MYSELF, DETAILING EVENTS UP UNTIL EIGHT YEARS IN THE FUTURE.

I AM CERTAIN NOW.

AFTER MY MEETING WITH ANNE, I REREAD THAT WORN-OUT DIARY.

FDUN

FDUN

UNTIL THE MOMENT I WAS—

SHUDDER

CLENCH

I HAVEN'T A CLUE HOW I WOUND UP HERE, BUT THIS IS MY CHANCE!

I MUST AVOID THAT HORRID FUTURE!

FLAP

FLAP

FLAP

FLAP

N-N-NEVER! I REFUSE! I WILL NOT ALLOW IT!

IN A MATTER OF YEARS, THE EMPIRE'S ECONOMY WILL FALTER.

AND AS IF THAT'S NOT ENOUGH, A FAMINE AND A PLAGUE WILL SOON FOLLOW...

THE POPULACE WILL RISE UP IN A REVOLUTION...

...TO WHICH A NEIGHBORING COUNTRY WILL LEND ITS AID.

AS I READ THROUGH THE DIARY, IT ALL SLOWLY BUT SURELY CAME BACK TO ME...

...

HOWEVER...

IF THERE IS NO BREAD, THEN LET THEM EAT MEAT!

I...BELIEVE THAT IS HOW IT HAPPENED, AT LEAST.

I MUST CONFESS THAT AT THE TIME, I HAD NEXT TO NO INTEREST IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

...I KNOW NOTHING OF HOW TO COPE WITH POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STRIFE!

EVEN IF I KNOW EVERYTHING THAT WILL HAPPEN...

FLING

I'VE NO CHOICE.

I SHALL HAVE TO SEEK *HIM* OUT...

THUMP

THUMP

THUMP

THWACK

I REMEMBER HIM, YES...

AND I REMEMBER THAT HE WAS TERRIBLY RUDE...

11 FLIP 17

"UNDERHANDED FOUR-EYES"

STUPID FOUR-EYES

GODDAMNED FOUR-EYES

ANNE WASN'T THE ONLY ONE WHO NEVER ABANDONED ME. THERE WAS A MAN WHO STAYED BY MY SIDE TO THE END.

A YOUNG, BRILLIANT OFFICIAL WHO WORKED HIMSELF TO THE BONE TO SAVE THE EMPIRE AND ITS ROYAL FAMILY FROM CERTAIN DOOM.

...THE FOOL WHO GOT HIMSELF KICKED OUT TO THE COUNTRYSIDE...

Four-eyes this, four-eyes that!!!

WHY?! WHY IS HIS NAME WRITTEN NOWHERE IN THIS WRETCHED DIARY?!

THAT WRETCHED DIARY WAS WRITTEN BY MIA HERSELF.

IF HE IS...

HMPH

THAT'S RIGHT — I DO BELIEVE HE MENTIONED HAVING WORKED IN THE CAPITAL PRIOR TO HIS EXILE.

COULD IT BE THAT HE'S STILL HERE NOW?

LUNATEAR— THE CAPITAL OF THE TEARMOON EMPIRE

THE GOLDEN MOON MINISTRY

UMM...

...PRINCESS MIA?

OH, NOTHING MUCH.

WHAT EXACTLY ARE WE DOING HERE?

SOME-ONE YOU WISH...

...TO MEET?

THERE'S SOMEONE I WISH TO MEET.

Conclusion: Jumped!

Oh, my!

I SUPPOSE I APPRECIATE IT.

...?

THUMP

?

I UNDER-STAND! REST ASSURED, I'LL DO WHATEVER I CAN TO HELP!

WHY WOULD YOU ALLOW SUCH WASTEFUL SPENDING?

PEEK

!

IF THIS CONTINUES, THE EMPIRE'S FINANCES WILL IMPLODE BEFORE WE KNOW IT!

ENOUGH OF THIS PRATTLE!

SURELY, YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THIS!

SILENCE!

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH BY NITPICKING TRIVIALITIES?!

?.

THESE ARE HARDLY TRIVIALITIES!

AT THIS RATE, THE EMPIRE...

I'VE STRUCK GOLD!

OH?
A YOUNG OFFICIAL, FIGHTING ALONE TO BRING THE EMPIRE BACK TO ITS DAYS OF GLORY?

HMM...

THAT'S WHAT THEY SAY, YOUR HIGHNESS! IF ONLY HE'D PAY THE CASTLE A VISIT!

NOTHING BEATS A MAN WHO'S AS CAPABLE AS HE IS HANDSOME!

I SHALL PERSONALLY THANK THIS MAN FOR HIS EFFORTS.

HAND-SOME...!

YOU'VE PIQUED MY INTEREST.

MY! YES, I SEE IT...

HIS LOOKS SATISFY EVEN MY DISCERNING EYE!

EXTEND

PRINCESS SMILE

プリンセススマイル

YOUR WORK HAS BEEN MOST SATISFACTORY, GOOD SIR.

...

DO YOU...

...?

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MUCH IT COSTS...

...TO FEED YOU ROYALS?

...HUH?

...

KLOOM!

I CAME HERE TO THANK YOU! WHY MUST I BE SUBJECT TO SUCH—

P-PARDON ME?

DO YOU NOT THINK THAT WAS TERRIBLY RUDE OF YOU?!

WH-WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS...?

BA-DUMP

HMPH

HOW LONG DO YOU INTEND TO STAND THERE? YOU'RE IN THE WAY.

IF YOU HAVE SPARE TIME, THERE ARE PLENTY OF MATTERS ONLY YOU CAN ATTEND TO. OCCUPY YOURSELF WITH THOSE...

...PRINCESS MIA.

HOW—

H—

H—

?

I SUPPOSE OUR FIRST MEETING WAS SOMETHING OF A DEBACLE.

HOW DARE HE?! I SHALL NEVER FORGIVE THAT WRETCH!

HUH...?

THAT CONNIVING FOUR-EYES IS? TRULY?

AND YET...

...

I SEE...

YES! HE'S BEEN RUNNING HIMSELF RAGGED PETITIONING FOR YOUR RELEASE, YOUR HIGHNESS.

AND THAT'S NOT ALL— IT SEEMS HE'S BEEN WORKING THIS WHOLE TIME TO RESTORE THE EMPIRE, ALL ON HIS OWN!

JUNIOR TAX OFFICER LUDWIG!

AHAH!!

IF YOU'RE SO PASSIONATE ABOUT THE EMPIRE'S FINANCES, I HEREBY APPOINT YOU TO THE SCARLET MOON MINISTRY!

HMM? THE SCARLET MOON MINISTRY?

YES, THAT'S RIGHT.

YES...?

HIS NAME WAS LUDWIG...

THAT'S NOT...

I WOULD. PERHAPS RAISING TAXES ON THE COUNTRY FOLK WILL EARN YOU THE NEEDED FUNDS TO SOLVE THIS SO-CALLED IMPENDING CRISIS!

YOU WOULD SEND ME TO THE COUNTRY-SIDE?

M-MOONS HAVE MERCY!

THAT STUPID FOUR-EYES IS GETTING HIMSELF EXILED AS WE SPEAK!

G-

GUILLOTINE!

HYEEK!

IN THE FUTURE I KNOW, BY THE TIME HE RETURNS TO THE CAPITAL, THE SITUATION WILL BE BEYOND SAVING!

AND THAT MEANS I'M HEADED STRAIGHT FOR THE...

SCREECH

W-

WAIT JUUUST A MOMENT!

?

AND WHAT DO YOU...

AH, WELL, I DO APOLOGIZE FOR SUBJECTING YOUR HIGHNESS TO SUCH TEDIOUS—

NO MATTER. MORE IMPOR-TANTLY...

Y-YOUR HIGHNESS!

I'VE HEARD EVERYTHING, AND I BELIEVE I UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION!

I WOULD MUCH RATHER YOU DEBATE HIM IN GOOD FAITH AND WORK TOGETHER FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE EMPIRE.

Y-YES, I SEE, BUT...

I MUST SAY, I AM HARDLY IMPRESSED!

THROWING A YOUNG OFFICIAL TO THE WAYSIDE DOES NOT STRIKE ME AS TERRIBLY WISE.

...

OH? MY, DOES MY OPINION MEAN SO LITTLE TO YOU?

WHA?!

N-NO, BY NO MEANS, YOUR HIGHNESS!

MARVELOUS! I'M PLEASED TO HEAR IT.

STEP

SPIN

NOW THEN, AS FOR YOU...

I BELIEVE YOUR NAME WAS... LUDWIG, WAS IT?

HUH? AH, YES...

I WOULD LIKE A WORD WITH YOU!

I TRUST YOU DON'T MIND?

AH!

I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW—I MEAN... I'M AFRAID I'VE MANY MATTERS TO ATTEND TO, YOUR HIGHNESS.

PRINCESS MIA, HOW DARING!

EEEK!

SO, WHAT DO YOU NEED FROM ME?

W-WAIT JUST A MOMENT!

I SHOULDN'T GET IN THEIR WAY!

SCAMPER

I SIMPLY WISH TO SPEAK FOR A MOMENT.

WELL, AS I SAID, I'M BUSY...

THERE'S SOMETHING I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU ABOUT.

IN ONE EAR AND OUT THE OTHER, HUH...?

WELL THEN, TO PUT IT SIMPLY...

SIGH...

ALL RIGHT, LET'S HEAR IT.

SHE'S EVEN MORE SELFISH THAN I EXPECTED.

INHALE

...

TWITCH

HOW WOULD ONE GO ABOUT RESTORING THE EMPIRE'S FINANCES?

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MUCH YOUR OWN MEALS COST?

!

HMPH...

ALLOW ME TO REPLY WITH A QUESTION OF MY OWN...

...YOUR HIGHNESS.

DO YOU TRULY BELIEVE YOU COULD RESTORE THE EMPIRE WITHOUT EVEN THAT MOST BASIC OF KNOWLEDGE?

YOU DON'T, DO YOU?

...

CROSS

LET ME SEE...

EACH OF MY MEALS COSTS THE SAME AS ONE MONTH OF YOUR SALARY...

...COMING OUT TO ROUGHLY ONE CRESCENT GOLD. DOES IT NOT?

...?!

SHOCKED

LECTURE

THIS...

THIS FEELS...

LECTURE

LECTURE

LECTURE

...

TO BEGIN WITH, THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE EMPIRE'S FINANCIAL WOES IS THE SIMPLE FACT THAT MORE MONEY IS GOING OUT THAN COMING IN. TO RESOLVE THIS...

PETRIFIED

LECTURE

LECTURE

LECTURE

THIS FEELS SO TERRIBLY GOOD!

ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?

YOUR HIGHNESS!

NOT EVEN MY FATHER WOULD SCOLD ME LIKE THIS...

...

TO BEGIN WITH, THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE EMPIRE'S FINANCIAL WOES IS THE SIMPLE FACT THAT MORE MONEY IS GOING OUT THAN COMING IN. TO RESOLVE THIS...

AND YET THIS MAN...

A FINE FIGUREHEAD YOU MAKE!

THE EMPIRE'S PRINCESS UNDERSTANDS NEXT TO NOTHING ABOUT ITS STATE OF AFFAIRS?

SHWK

SHWK

BLAH

BLAH

BLAH

BLAH

BLAH

BLAH

BLAH

BLAH

THIS HUMILIA-TION...

THIS STUPID FOUR-EYES!

I WON'T FORGET THIS TILL THE DAY I DIE!

SKCH

SKCH

SKCH

SKCH

SKCH

SKCH

I SHALL RECORD EVERY WORD OF IT IN MY DIARY!

IN SHORT...

...THIS IS ALL FLAGRANT PLAGIARISM.

AND THE EMPIRE'S PROBLEMS DO NOT END THERE. IN PARTICULAR, THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DETERIORATING RELATIONS BETWEEN US AND OUR NEIGHBORING NATIONS CANNOT BE UNDERSTATED...

THAT WILL BE ENOUGH.

!

...AND THAT, OF COURSE, IMPLIES...

GCMS

GCMS

ドヤSMUUUG

THIS IS IT! THIS IS THE MOMENT I THROW THIS MAN'S SANCTIMONIOUS SERMON RIGHT BACK IN HIS BESPECTACLED FACE!

BOW

TO THINK THE ROYAL FAMILY WAS HOME TO ONE SO BRILLIANT AS YOU... WORDS FAIL ME.

!!!

CRASH!!!

KRA-KOW!!

BRILLIANT
...IS SINGING MY PRAISES?!
WHAT IN THE MOONS?!
B-BRILLIANT?!
THAT MISERABLE FOUR-EYES, A MAN WHO NAGS YOU SHOULD YOU SO MUCH AS MAKE EYE CONTACT WITH HIM...
NAG NAG NAG NAG NAG NAG NAG NAG NAG NAG NAG NAG NAG NAG NAG NAG NAG NAG
BUT...YOUR HIGHNESS?
I FEEL AS IF I WAS REBORN JUST FOR THE SAKE OF THIS MOMENT...
...GAH!
WITH KNOWLEDGE SO BOUNDLESS, WHAT NEED DO YOU HAVE OF MY HELP? COULD YOU NOT RESTORE THE EMPIRE ALL ON YOUR OWN?

AH, BUT OF COURSE.

I-I, UMM, THAT IS...

Y-YES, PERHAPS, BUT YOU SEE... THE THING IS...

OH NO! I'VE GONE TOO FAR!

OH GOD はやや

THE PEA-BRAINED PRINCESS REARS HER HEAD.

I-I HAVE NO IDEA! I HAVEN'T THE FAINTEST CLUE WHAT TO SAY!

OH GOD

WERE YOU WORRIED THAT NO ONE WOULD LEND AN EAR TO YOUR WORDS?

YOUR HIGHNESS IS STILL YOUNG.

EXCUSE: SEIZED.

THAT IS ABSOLUTELY CORRECT!

POINT

YES! THAT!

...I CAN STILL BE WRONG, AT TIMES.

THAT IS WHY I ASK FOR YOUR AID AND YOUR UNRESERVED ADVICE.

MOREOVER, NO MATTER HOW—WHAT WAS IT?

AH, YES— ***BRILLIANT*** I MAY BE...

NOT A WORD ONE SHOULD APPLY TO ONESELF.

TRULY, THERE ARE NO WORDS...

NO SPARKLE

YES! HE BOUGHT IT!

CLENCH

HUMBLE IN SPITE OF YOUR WISDOM, AND WILLING TO CONSULT WITH YOU SUBORDINATES'...

PACE

PACE

UGH...

PEEK

JUST A LITTLE!

SURELY I CAN WATCH FOR JUST A MOMENT...?

STOP

I JUST CAN'T HELP BUT WONDER...

...HOW MILADY'S ROMANCE IS FARING!

KNEEL

!

MY PATH IS NOW CLEAR.

I, LUDWIG, PLEDGE TO SERVE YOU WITH ALL MY BODY AND SOUL, YOUR HIGHNESS.

HEINOUS MISINTERPRETATION NOTWITHSTANDING, MIA GAINS HER SECOND AND GREATEST ALLY.

MARVELOUS! I ACCEPT YOUR PLEDGE.

GAAASP!!!

HEE HEE HEE...

HUM

HUM

The most brilliant in the land!!!

BRILLIANT...

ME, BRILLIANT! IMAGINE!

OHO HO HO HO!

YOU MUST BE IN A LOVELY MOOD, YOUR HIGHNESS!

MY, YOU CAN TELL?

OH, IT'S OBVIOUS!

CLATTER

AH!

THAT'S RIGHT!

THIS WAS A DAY TO REMEMBER! I MUST WRITE IT ALL DOWN IN MY DIARY!

MILADY, PLEASE... THAT'S INDECENT.

Your skirt...

ROLL

OHO HO HO!

OHHH HO HO HO!

ROLL

HYUP!

FWOMP

...

OHO HO HO! YOU MEAN ME? MIA, THE EMPIRE'S MOST BRILLIANT PRINCESS?

WELL, ***HER BRILLIANCE*** SEES NO PROBLEM HERE!

SHE MUST BE OVER THE MOONS TO HAVE MET WITH THE MAN SHE FANCIES!

BEAM

AND SO, MY BRILLIANCE WAS SUNG THROUGHOUT THE LAND, TOLLING THE BEGINNING OF MY RISE TO GLORY... PERFECT!

IF I'VE GONE TO THE PAST AND CHANGED THE CONTENTS OF THIS DIARY...

...THEN PERHAPS THE ONE FROM THE FUTURE...?

MY! COULD IT BE THAT I HAVE THE TALENT TO BE A POET OR PLAYWRIGHT?

JUST LOOK HOW MUCH I'VE WRITTEN, AND SO QUICKLY!

...

GASP!!!

OPEN...

!!!
AAAAA
BWAAAAA
WHA—
WHAT IN THE MOONS?!
TODAY'S PAGE HAS CHANGED!
FLIP
FLIP
AND THE NEXT ONE, AND THE ONE AFTER! THEY'VE ALL BEEN REWRITTEN!
AND SO, MY BRILLIANCE WAS SUNG THROUGHOUT THE LAND, TOLLING THE BEGINNING OF MY RISE TO GLORY.
...

A-AND IF IT IS, THEN PERHAPS...

Ah

THE ENDING...

1P

FLIP

SO BY FORGING AN ALLIANCE WITH LUDWIG AND PUTTING HIM TO WORK RIGHT AWAY, THE COURSE OF HISTORY HAS BEGUN TO CHANGE?

COULD IT TRULY BE...?

...

A PLAGUE THAT SPRUNG OUT OF THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL'S SLUMS...

THE REVOLT OF A MINORITY TRIBE IN THE OUTLANDS...

ALL SORTS OF INTERNATIONAL INCIDENTS...

...

IF I JUST READ MY REWRITTEN DIARY AND COME UP WITH A PLAN...

IT'S ALL RIGHT. I'M ALL RIGHT.

SQUEEZE

I STILL HAVE TIME.

...AM I SUPPOSED TO SOLVE ANY OF THESE PROBLEMS?!

COLD SWEAT

AND JUST HOW...

I CANNOT LET LUDWIG'S PRAISE GO TO MY HEAD!

TH-THIS WILL NOT DO!

?

ANNE!

YES?

WHOOSH

がば

THIS CANNOT CONTINUE!

AND SO, MIA SPRINGS INTO ACTION...

I HAVE THINKING TO DO!

AND FOR THAT, I REQUIRE SWEETS!

...IN A FAIRLY PETTY DIRECTION.

THE PALTRY-MINDED PRINCESS'S STRUGGLES HAVE ONLY JUST BEGUN.

Tearmoon Empire

Chapter 3

LUNATEAR—THE CAPITAL OF THE TEARMOON EMPIRE

BEHIND THE CITY'S RESPLENDENT VENEER LURKS A SHADOW FROM WHICH THE PEOPLE AVERT THEIR EYES.

THE SLUMS, COMMONLY KNOWN AS THE NEWMOON DISTRICT.

YES... AMONG ALL THE PROBLEMS I MUST SOLVE, THIS ONE OUGHT TO COME FIRST.

A MATTER OF YEARS FROM NOW, THE CAPITAL WILL BE DEVASTATED BY PLAGUE...

ACCORDING TO MY REWRITTEN DIARY, THE EMPIRE'S FINANCES WILL IMPROVE THANKS TO LUDWIG UNTIL AN OUTBREAK OF DISEASE IN THE SLUMS WIPES AWAY ALL THAT PROGRESS IN ONE FELL SWOOP.

10% OF THE CAPITAL'S POPULACE SUCCUMBED TO THE EPIDEMIC...

I HAD NO IDEA.

AND THAT'S NOT ALL...

YOU ROYALS ARE A BUNCH OF DEVILS!

I see now...

IN RETROSPECT, PERHAPS IT WASN'T A SURPRISE I HAD EGGS THROWN AT ME ONCE OR TWICE.

FWSH
FWSH
FWSH
FWSH
...BUT WHAT IN THE MOONS CAN I DO ABOUT A PANDEMIC?!
I CAN'T SIMPLY IGNORE IT...
HH
AND THEN, OFF TO THE GUILLOTINE...
OH, ANNE.
LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE THINKING THROUGH SOMETHING COMPLICATED, AREN'T YOU, MILADY?
PEEK
IS THAT SO? IF ONLY THERE WERE SOMEONE KNOWLEDGEABLE YOU COULD ASK FOR HELP!
SOMEONE KNOWLEDGE-ABLE...
HMM...
DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO RESEARCH? WHY NOT CHECK THE GRAND LIBRARY?
I despise studying!
I'D RATHER NOT...

HUH?!

THAT'S IT, ANNE!

THE OPPOSITE OF SELF-RELIANT.

I HAVE A NEVER-ENDING FONT OF WISDOM ON MY SIDE NOW!

KNOW-IT-ALL

I CAN JUST ASK HIM! IT'S SO SIMPLE!

LUDWIG? YOU MEAN...

TO LUDWIG'S PLACE OF WORK.

TO THAT ACCURSED FOUR... *AHEM!*

FWOOSH

WE SHALL DEPART AT ONCE!

HUH? TO WHERE?

THE MISUNDER-STANDING CONTINUES.

OH, YES!

OF COURSE! HIM!

OF COURSE WE WILL!

YOU CAN'T MISS YOUR CHANCE TO CATCH HIS EYE!

BWAAAH

WILL WE? I SEE NOTHING WRONG WITH WHAT I'M WEARING NOW...

IN THAT CASE, WE'LL HAVE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR OUTFIT!

HUH?

PUSH

PUSH

WHY ARE YOU SO EXCITED ABOUT THIS?

COME, MILADY! TO THE DRESSING ROOM!

FWOOSH

MY!

I'VE NEVER SEEN THIS DRESS BEFORE!

TWIRL

HEE HEE! IT LOOKS LOVELY ON YOU, MILADY!

ALL THIS TO GO VISIT THAT FOUR-EYES?

Go on, have a seat!

YOU'RE PAYING A VISIT TO A GENTLE-MAN!

WE SIMPLY MUST GET YOU AS PRETTIED UP AS POSSIBLE!

OH...?

THAT HAIRPIN WAS A GIFT YOU RECEIVED FROM A PROMINENT MERCHANT LAST YEAR, YOUR HIGHNESS.

COULD THIS BE...?

IS SOMETHING WRONG, MILADY?

OH, IS THAT SO? THEN IT WAS THE PERFECT CHOICE!

I RECALL YOU BEING MOST PLEASED BY IT!

I SUPPOSE SO...

WELL...
IT WILL DO
FOR A VISIT TO
THAT ACCURSED
FOUR-EYES.

LUDWIG
HEWITT

HAVING QUICKLY SET HIS SIGHTS ON A POSITION IN GOVERNMENT, LUDWIG DEVOTED HIMSELF TO HIS STUDIES...AND SOON REALIZED THE EMPIRE WAS ROTTEN TO ITS CORE.

AS SUCH, HIS CONTEMPT FOR NOBILITY AND THE ROYAL FAMILY RUNS DEEP.

THE SECOND SON OF A MERCHANT, LUDWIG'S TALENT AND INTELLIGENCE WERE EVIDENT FROM AN EARLY AGE.

GOOD DAY TO YOU, LUDWIG.

OR AT LEAST, IT USED TO...

HIT SPIN!

PRINCESS MIA!

OH, IS THAT SO?

YOU SEEM... DIFFERENT SOMEHOW, YOUR HIGHNESS.

RUSH

WELCOME, YOUR HIGHNESS!

BEAM

YES! YOU LOOK LOVELY TODAY.

M-MY, THANK YOU.

THANK YOU.

LUDWIG'S GLASSES CANNOT CORRECT HIS SKEWED PERSPECTIVE OF MIA.

...BUT TODAY SHE LOOKS JUST LIKE THE FAIRY OF A WOODLAND SPRING!

THE DAY WE MET, SHE WAS LIKE THE GODDESS OF THE MOON, BRIMMING WITH WISDOM...

IT WAS WORTH THE EFFORT OF GETTING YOU ALL PRETTIED UP, WASN'T IT, MILADY?!

SEEING THE FOUR-EYES ACT SO DOCILE TRULY IS UNSETTLING...

NOW THEN, I'VE COME TODAY TO ASK FOR YOUR ADVICE ON A CERTAIN MATTER.

MY... ADVICE?

YOUR HARD WORK IS GREATLY APPRECIATED, LUDWIG.

THE CREDIT IS ALL YOURS, YOUR HIGHNESS. THANKS TO YOU, MY WORK HAS BEEN PROCEEDING FAR MORE SMOOTHLY.

AFTER ALL, MY OWN INTELLECT IS NOTHING COMPARED TO HER GOD-GIVEN WISDOM!

LUDWIG'S OPINION OF MIA HAS FAR EXCEEDED THE REALM OF REASON.

IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE HER HIGHNESS HAS ANY COMPLAINTS ABOUT MY WORK SO FAR...

...BUT IT COULD VERY WELL BE THAT SHE'S PICKED UP ON SOMETHING I'VE MISSED.

YES, OF COURSE! BUT, WHERE?

OH...

YES, QUITE. AND WHILE WE COULD HAVE OUR CHAT HERE...

...THERE'S SOMEWHERE I WOULD LIKE YOU TO ESCORT ME.

SHOCK

...JUST THE NEWMOON DISTRICT.

MILADY, YOU CAN'T! THAT'S NO PLACE FOR A GIRL LIKE YOU!

WHAT?!

YOU WANT ME TO TAKE YOU TO THE SLUMS?!

SHAKE

HE'S RIGHT! IT'D BE MUCH TOO DANGEROUS!

NOT EVEN MOST COMMONERS SET FOOT IN THAT DISTRICT, TO SAY NOTHING OF NOBILITY!

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD THE IMPERIAL PRINCESS BE ANYWHERE NEAR THERE!

LUDWIG, I NEED YOU TO SEE THINGS WITH YOUR OWN EYES AND TELL ME YOUR HONEST THOUGHTS.

THIS IS SOMETHING I MUST DO.

ME...?

...

TAP

TAP

PRINCESS MIA!

GLANCE

GLANCE

TMP

TMP

PLEASE ALLOW US TO TAKE THE LEAD, YOUR HIGHNESS!

I'LL BE PERFECTLY ALL RIGHT! DON'T WORRY.

IT'S DANGEROUS FOR YOU TO GET TOO FAR AHEAD!

INCIDENTALLY, YOUR HIGHNESS...

HMM? OH, MY FATHER?

...IS HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY AWARE OF YOUR LITTLE EXCURSION TODAY?

Your Highness!!!

I CAN SIMPLY INFORM HIM AFTER WE RETURN.

NO NEED TO WORRY!

I AM VERY WORRIED...

FRANKLY, I'D HAVE PREFERRED TO HAVE ANOTHER TEN GUARDS, MINIMUM.

DO YOU THINK THIS MIGHT BE AN AWFUL MISTAKE...?

THIS WAS ALL JUST TOO SUDDEN.

DAMN, IT STINKS HERE...

UNLIKE THE PRISON, THE AIR ISN'T STAGNANT HERE.

IT MUST BE DIFFICULT FOR THE PEOPLE HERE TO BATHE, DON'T YOU THINK?

MY, DO YOU THINK SO?

IT HARDLY BOTHERS ME AT ALL.

HUH?

SPEECHLESS

NOW THEN, LET US BE ON OUR WAY!

AFTER THREE DAYS WITHOUT CLEANING ONESELF, ANYONE WOULD START TO SMELL.

THEY'RE HARDLY ANY DIFFERENT THAN TRAVELERS WHO COME FROM AFAR.

...?

WHAT THE— YOUR HIGHNESS!

EXCUSE ME? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

TOUCH

AT A GLANCE, I WOULD DIAGNOSE HIM WITH HUNGER, NOT SICKNESS.

IT'S HARDLY UNCOMMON IN THESE PARTS.

DO YOU SUPPOSE HE'S ILL, PERHAPS?

ANNE? GIVE HIM SOME OF THE SNACKS WE BROUGHT WITH US.

HUH? AH, ALL RIGHT!

I SEE...

INDEED, HUNGER IS NO SMALL SUFFERING.

WHAT IS IT?

LUDWIG?

I HAVE A QUESTION FOR YOU.

HUH?

WHAT SHOULD I DO TO ENSURE THAT A PLAGUE DOES NOT BREAK OUT HERE IN THE FUTURE?

...A PLAGUE?

DID YOU SAY...

IT NEVER EVEN CROSSED MY MIND...

YOUR HIGHNESS, I THINK WE SHOULD TAKE THIS BOY SOMEWHERE HE CAN GET SOME REST!

THERE'S A CHURCH NEARBY! SHOULD WE BRING HIM THERE?

I HOPED TO SEE MORE OF THIS AREA, SO THAT SUITS ME PERFECTLY.

YES, PERHAPS WE SHOULD.

HOWEVER...

AN EPIDEMIC WOULD RENDER ALL OF IT MEANINGLESS.

I'VE DEVOTED MYSELF SINGLE-MINDEDLY TO PREVENTING THE EMPIRE'S FINANCIAL COLLAPSE...

...AND THANKS TO HER HIGHNESS'S BACKING, LITTLE BY LITTLE, MY COUNTERMEASURES HAVE BEGUN TO BEAR FRUIT.

AND THE PRINCESS...

DID SHE BRING ME HERE JUST TO MAKE ME REALIZE IT...?

SHE INFERRED THAT LOOMING DANGER LONG AGO.

COULD IT BE?

IS SHE NOTHING LESS THAN A HEAVEN-SENT SAGE, COME TO DELIVER THE EMPIRE FROM CERTAIN DOOM?!

A TERMINAL CASE OF MIA SYNDROME.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING CARE OF HIM!

OF COURSE! WE SHALL ACCEPT FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS CHILD'S HEALTH.

ふぁFWSH

AND EVEN IF THEY HAD THE RESOURCES, THIS CHURCH AND ITS ORPHANAGE ARE TOO SMALL TO ACCEPT MORE THAN A FEW PATIENTS.

THIS IS THE MOST THEY HAVE TO OFFER THE ILL...?

TREATING AND FEEDING EVERY SICK PERSON IN THE DISTRICT HERE WOULD BE BEYOND IMPOSSIBLE...

I'D NEVER HAVE KNOWN IF I HADN'T COME TO SEE IT FOR MYSELF...

PRINCESS MIA WAS ENTIRELY CORRECT.

THE ODDS OF AN EPIDEMIC BREAKING OUT HERE CANNOT BE DISMISSED.

YOU HAVE MY THANKS FOR TAKING THE CHILD WE BROUGHT HERE INTO YOUR CARE.

FATHER.

HUMBLED?

I DON'T BELIEVE I'VE DONE ANYTHING SO PRAISEWORTHY. AFTER ALL...

MOREOVER, WE ARE HUMBLED TO BE GRACED BY YOUR PRESENCE, YOUR HIGHNESS.

NO THANKS ARE NEEDED. WE MERELY DID OUR DUTY AS SERVANTS OF GOD.

SPARKLE

NO MATTER THE TIME OR PLACE, MIA ALWAYS PUTS HERSELF FIRST.

THE CHURCH IS AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION! IF I GET IN THEIR GOOD GRACES, I CAN SEEK ASYLUM WITH THEM IF WORSE COMES TO WORST!

SPARKLE

...THIS PLACE IS A PART OF MY BELOVED EMPIRE!

CLICK

YOUR HIGH-NESS?

INCIDEN-TALLY, FATHER, I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU HAVE FRIENDS IN OTHER NATIONS, OR—

OH, SUCH BENEVOLENCE... IT IS TRULY A RELIEF TO KNOW THAT ONE SUCH AS YOU IS PART OF THE ROYAL FAMILY.

I'VE CONSIDERED THE MEANS AVAILABLE TO US TO PREVENT AN EPIDEMIC.

MARVELOUS! I KNEW YOU WERE UP TO THE TASK!

NO, I SIMPLY HOPED TO TELL YOU THAT I UNDERSTAND YOUR INTENTIONS NOW.

MY, LUDWIG! IS IT TIME TO GO ALREADY?

THE FIRST IS TO PROVIDE THE POPULACE WITH FOOD AND BOLSTER THEIR STAMINA.

AND THE SECOND IS TO IMPROVE THEIR ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE.

SO THEN, WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PREVENT A PLAGUE IN THE NEWMOON DISTRICT?

THERE ARE TWO WAYS WE COULD DO SO.

...IS THAT BOTH WOULD COST A HEFTY SUM OF MONEY, I SUPPOSE.

THE PROBLEM, OF COURSE...

TOUCH

IN THAT CASE...

YES, THIS SHOULD DO.

I SEE.

Y-YES, PRECISELY.

TO OBTAIN THE FUNDS TO NOT ONLY BUILD A HOSPITAL, BUT MAINTAIN IT AND DISTRIBUTE FOOD... WE'LL HAVE TO REBALANCE THE EMPIRE'S FINANCES ALL OVER AGAIN.

EXTEND...

WILL THE FUNDS FROM SELLING THIS SUFFICE?

WHA...?

HOWEVER PRECIOUS AN ITEM MAY BE TO YOU...

...HOWEVER HARD YOU TRY TO HOLD ON TO IT...

...A TIME WILL COME WHEN YOU LOSE IT, OR IT BREAKS. THERE'S NO PREVENTING IT.

BUT YOUR HIGHNESS!

ISN'T THAT THE HAIRPIN YOU LOVE SO MUCH?!

IT'S FINE. I DON'T MIND.

AND SO, I BELIEVE...

...IT IS BEST TO USE SUCH THINGS IN A MEANINGFUL WAY WHILE WE CAN.

PRINCESS MIA...

YOUR HIGHNESS...

TRULY, YOU ARE...

CLENCH

...A LIVING SAINT!

YES... I MUST USE IT IN A MEANINGFUL WAY.

IF IT'S GOING TO BE STOLEN BY THOSE FILTHY BRUTES IN THE FUTURE...

...I'D RATHER SELL IT NOW AND USE THE PROFIT FOR MY OWN SAKE!

A DECIDEDLY LESS THAN SAINTLY REASON.

YOUR HIGHNESS... I ASSURE YOU, YOUR FEELINGS ARE NOT LOST ON ME.

SELLING THIS PIN WILL HARDLY PROVIDE US WITH THE FUNDS WE NEED...

...BUT I'M SURE HER HIGHNESS KNOWS THAT FULL WELL ALREADY.

PASS

...SHALL ENSURE THIS TREASURE IS USED TO ITS FULLEST POTENTIAL.

KNOW THAT I, LUDWIG...

AND THAT MEANS...

MARVELOUS!

PLEASE DO.

THE PRINCESS SOLD OFF A PRIZED POSSESSION FOR THE SAKE OF THE COMMON FOLK?!

CLAMOR

WHAT?!

...BUT WE ARE STILL FAR FROM HAVING THE FUNDS WE NEED.

THE YOUNG PRINCESS HAD SHOWN COMPASSION OF THE HIGHEST ORDER.

THE MASSES WERE STUNNED BY THE DEPTHS OF HER CHARITY.

AND SO I ASK YOU, THE EMPIRE'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS OF NOBLES...

...HAVING WITNESSED HER HIGHNESS'S UNFALTERING DEDICATION TO AID THE RESIDENTS OF THE NEWMOON DISTRICT...

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE MATTER?

THE NOBILITY HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO EMULATE MIA'S ACT OF CHARITY.

GUH...

...PLANS TO BUILD A LARGE HOSPITAL IN THE NEWMOON DISTRICT WERE FINALIZED.

AND SO, TWENTY DAYS LATER...

CHEER

...PRIN-CESS MIA!

ALL HAIL...

HER HIGHNESS IS A GODDESS AMONG MEN!

THANK YOU, PRINCESS MIA!

SPARKLE キラ

SPARKLE キラ

SPARKLE キラ

SPARKLE キラ

SPARKLE

WE'VE DONE IT, YOUR HIGHNESS!

Our God-dess!

Prin-cess Mia!

Huz-zah!

THIS IS ALL THANKS TO YOU!

MIA, OF COURSE, HADN'T SO MUCH AS LIFTED A FINGER.

ACHOOO!

SNIFFLE

OH NO! DID YOU CATCH A COLD?

PERHAPS SOMEONE IS SPREADING RUMORS ABOUT ME...?

AH!

OR PERHAPS SOMEONE'S PRAISING ME FOR BEING SUCH A WISE, CHARITABLE, AND DOWNRIGHT DIVINE PRINCESS!

DISTRESSINGLY ENOUGH, THIS IS MORE OR LESS CORRECT.

Tearmoon Empire

Chapter 4

THE POOR PRINCE AND THE GOLDEN DRAGON

Once upon a time, a kindly prince ruled over a poverty-stricken nation.

Intent on helping, the prince shared his wealth with his people...

...only to wind up destitute himself.

At a loss, the prince set off to wander the world alone.

One day, he met an injured dragon and to nursed it back to health.

"Why do you offer aid to those who cannot repay you?" asked the dragon. "Much less one such as I, a menace to your fellow man?"

Surprised, the prince paused to ponder the dragon's question.

"Would you be satisfied if I told you...

...I wish only to bring smiles to the people of this nation?"

And so began the prince and his dragon companion's long journey.

MY...

PLEASE, TELL ME MORE!

THIS PRISON IS SO VERY DULL ALL THE TIME.

YOU DON'T HEAR MANY ADVENTURE STORIES AROUND THESE PARTS, DO YOU?

WHAT A WONDERFUL TALE.

OH, IS IT...?

OF COURSE! BUT THIS STORY'S STILL A WORK IN PROGRESS.

I'LL BRING THE NEXT CHAPTER AS SOON AS THE AUTHOR FINISHES IT!

IT WAS THE ONE SPARK OF JOY THAT WARMED THE COLD, DARK CELL MIA CALLED HOME.

AND SO ANNE TOLD THE TALE, PIECE BY PIECE.

UNTIL...

THE STORY... WILL NEVER BE CONTINUED?

DOES THE AUTHOR PERHAPS HAVE WRITER'S BLOCK?

IF SO, I'LL WAIT FOR HOWEVER LONG IT—

THAT'S NOT IT!

I SEE... BUT WHY?

YES. I'M AFRAID IT WON'T.

I WISH I COULD READ YOU THE REST OF IT.

SHE WAS ALWAYS... A FRAIL CHILD...

AND THE FAMINE... WE COULDN'T GET HER THE FOOD SHE NEEDED...

...

SHE'S NO LONGER WITH US.

NO, NOT A DREAM... ALL OF THAT TRULY HAPPENED IN THE FUTURE.

A DREAM...

...

YET I HAVE TO WONDER...

CLENCH

I NEVER EVEN MET THAT STORY'S AUTHOR.

...IS SHE OUT THERE SOMEWHERE, ALIVE AND WELL?

IN THIS WORLD OF SECOND CHANCES...

I MUST SAY, PRINCESS MIA...

...THAT WAS QUITE THE BOLD THING YOU DID THE OTHER DAY!

DAUGHTER OF AN EMINENT NOBLE: ESMERALDA

SIP

WHATEVER MIGHT YOU BE REFERRING TO?

OH, YOU KNOW, THE BUSINESS IN THE SLUMS! I HEARD ALL ABOUT IT.

YOU SOLD YOUR PRIZED HAIRPIN FOR THE SAKE OF THE COMMONERS, DID YOU NOT?

AH, YES, THAT...

SCHMOOZE

WE'RE THE CLOSEST OF FRIENDS, ARE WE NOT?!

OH, DO LET ME IN ON THE SECRET!

YES, WELL...

WHATEVER POSSESSED YOU TO DO SUCH A THING?

MY FATHER WAS UTTERLY PERPLEXED WHEN HE HEARD!

I JUST CAN'T SEEM TO GUESS WHAT IT COULD BE...

AT FIRST I THOUGHT IT WAS BUT A WHIM...

BUT THIS IS ***YOU*** WE'RE TALKING ABOUT, PRINCESS MIA! I'M CERTAIN THERE WAS SOMETHING MORE, SOMETHING DEEPER TO IT!

"CLOSEST OF FRIENDS" MY FOOT!

YOU WERE THE FIRST TO BETRAY ME WHEN THE REVOLUTION CAME KNOCKING!

I'M AFRAID THERE WAS NO DEEPER MEANING.

I SIMPLY FOLLOWED MY HEART, THAT'S ALL.

OH, IF ONLY THIS WOULD END ALREADY...

SIGH

WHY, WE COULD NEVER CARE FOR THE COMMONERS THE WAY YOU DO!

YOU'RE EVER SO KIND, PRINCESS MIA!

OHOHOHOHOHO

OH, HOW WONDERFUL!

CLATTER

CLUNK

IT'S FINALLY OVER...

UGH...

BLUHK

I THOUGHT SO...

THAT ATMOSPHERE MAKES YOU UNCOMFORTABLE, DOESN'T IT?

MY SHOULDERS ARE SO STIFF.

KRK

IT'S BEEN A LONG DAY, HASN'T IT, MILADY?

OH, MY! ICE CANDY!

THESE ARE EVER SO DELICIOUS!

YAAA...AAY!

BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT LIKE THE OTHER NOBLE LADIES.

YOU THOUGHT SO? BUT WHY?

...?

OPEN

IS...

...THAT SO?

PEOPLE LIKE THEM WOULD NEVER SET FOOT IN AN IMPOVERISHED DISTRICT BY CHOICE, AND WOULD NEVER GIVE UP THEIR POSSESSIONS OUT OF COMPASSION!

YOU'RE NOTHING LIKE THEM, PRINCESS MIA!

ABSOLUTELY NONE OF WHAT MIA DID WAS OUT OF GOODWILL.

LUDWIG'S PRAISE IS HARD ENOUGH TO HANDLE— THIS IS TOO MUCH!

I CAN HARDLY EVEN LOOK HER IN THE EYE!

STING STING

Conscience

CCC

A-ARE YOU SURE?! THEY LOOK SO EXPENSIVE!

IT'S FINE. THEY'RE NOT ESPECIALLY RARE.

HUH...?

I'VE DECIDED THAT YOU MAY HAVE THESE.

W-WELL THEN, COMPASSIONATE AS I AM...

PASS

BOOE

OH, WOW...

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

AH, BUT...

IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?

OH?

NO, IT'S JUST THAT MY LITTLE SISTERS WOULD LOVE THESE.

I WISH I COULD SHARE WITH THEM.

W-WAIT JUST A MOMENT, MILADY!

WE SHOULD HURRY!

IF YOU DON'T EAT ICE CANDIES QUICKLY, THEY'LL MELT BEFORE YOU KNOW IT!

IN THAT CASE, SHALL WE PAY YOUR HOME A VISIT NOW?

WHA?!

SHOCK

YOU CAN'T JUST VISIT A COMMONER'S HOUSE! SURELY THAT'S NOT ALLOWED?!

MY! WERE YOU NOT AWARE, ANNE?

YOUR PRINCESS IS A MOST WILLFUL YOUNG LADY!

OH JEEZ...

I-I-IT IS AN HONOR TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE, YOUR HIGHNESS!

I AM ANNE'S FATHER.

A-AND I'M HER MOTHER!

TH-THANK YOU, YOUR HIGHNESS, FOR GRANTING OUR DAUGHTER YOUR PATRONAGE! WE'RE ETERNALLY GRATEFUL!

YOUR DAUGHTER HAS BEEN A BLESSING! I'M TRULY GRATEFUL FOR HER SERVICE.

A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU. MY NAME IS MIA LUNA TEARMOON.

CURTSY!

AS IT SO HAPPENS, WE CAME TODAY TO DELIVER A GIFT TO YOU!

OH, THINK NOTHING OF IT!

I-I'M AFRAID WE HAVE NOTHING TO OFFER YOU, YOUR HIGHNESS...

ANNE, HER PARENTS, AND HER SISTER MAKES FOUR ICE CANDIES IN TOTAL! THAT MEANS THERE'LL BE PLENTY LEFT FOR ME!

THERE WERE EIGHT IN THE BOX, AFTER ALL! GOOD THING THE FOUR DUKES ARE SO GENEROUS!

NOW THEN, ANNE?

PLEASE SHOW ME TO YOUR SISTER! QUICKLY, NOW.

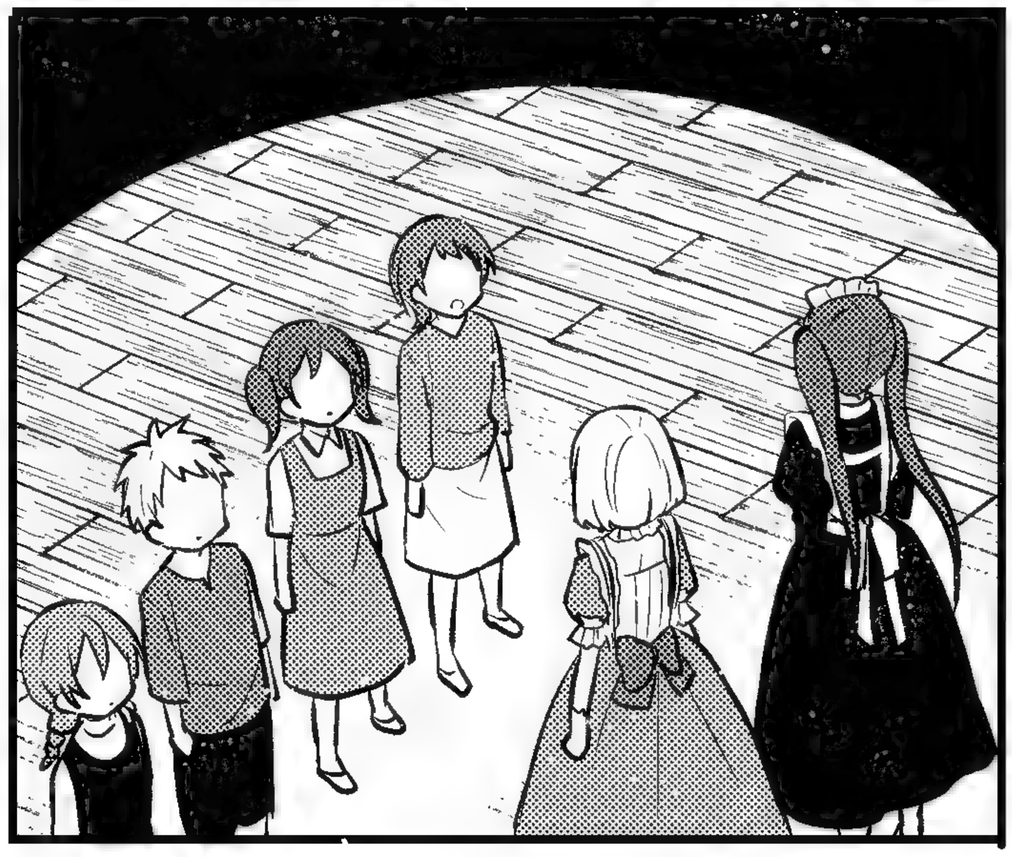
HUM

IT'S BEEN TERRIBLY LONG SINCE I LAST HAD AN ICE CANDY!

HUM

I'LL INTRODUCE YOU!

I TAKE IT...THESE WOULD BE YOUR...*MANY* SIBLINGS.



THIS IS RIKA.

MILLY.

JOHN.

AND EMILIA.

SAY HELLO TO PRINCESS MIA, EVERYONE!

HELLO!

HELLO!

7 OF THEM!

TH-THAT WAS FAR TOO CLOSE!

GOOD DAY TO YOU! I AM MOST PLEASED TO SEE YOU LOOKING WELL.

AND, I'M SORRY, MILADY...

WELL, AS LONG AS I GET TO EAT ONE, I SUPPOSE IT SHALL SUFFICE...

I KNOW IT'S IMPROPER FOR HER TO NOT COME GREET YOU, BUT, WELL...

THE OLDEST OF MY LITTLE SISTERS, ELISE, IS IN POOR HEALTH AND IS RESTING IN HER ROOM AT THE MOMENT.

...ERR?

MOMMY, DADDY, YOU SHOULD TRY THEM TOO!

THANK YOU, PRINCESS MIA!

SHUSH! THE PRINCESS IS WATCHING!

I'M SO TERRIBLY SORRY, YOUR HIGHNESS...

YAY!

YAY!

OH, WOOOW!

THERE'S STILL... ANOTHER...?

CAN WE REALLY HAVE THESE, YOUR HIGHNESS?!

!

THAT ACCURSED CHEAPSKATE COULDN'T HAVE PUT TEN IN?! CAN'T A DUKE'S DAUGHTER DO BETTER?!

AN ABRUPT REVERSAL OF OPINION.

TREMBLE

TREMBLE

THAT...

O-OH, WELL, I AM AT FAULT FOR PAYING YOU SUCH A SUDDEN VISIT.

YOU COULD HARDLY FORCE HER IF SHE'S UNWELL.

HUH?

PLEASE FORGIVE US, YOUR HIGHNESS.

I KNOW THERE'S NO EXCUSE FOR OUR DAUGHTER'S ABSENCE, NO MATTER THE CIRCUMSTANCES...

すすす

BOO HOO

THANK YOU SO MUCH, PRINCESS MIA!

THEY LOOK SO GOOD!

MORE IMPORTANTLY, PLEASE, EAT UP. GO ON, BEFORE THEY MELT.

GAAAH!

I CAN'T BEAR TO WATCH SUCH DELICACIES BE DEVOURED IN FRONT OF ME!

SQUEAL

SQUEAL

ARGH?!

ニヤリ

PRINCESS MIA...

HUH...?

AH, YES!

SHALL WE BRING YOUR LAST SISTER HER PORTION WHILE EVERYONE EATS!?

AH, YES, HOW WONDERFUL.

DRONE

THANK YOU SO MUCH! YOU'RE SO THOUGHTFUL!

I'M SURE MY SISTER WILL BE OVERJOYED TO HAVE YOU PAY HER A VISIT!

THAT'S RIGHT! SHE'S THE SAME AGE AS YOU, MILADY, BUT SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN FRAIL.

I WISH SHE WERE AS HEALTHY AS YOU ARE...

SO...

TMP

...YOUR SISTER'S NAME WAS ELISE, WAS IT?

AND THANKS TO YOU, MY SALARY'S A LOT HIGHER NOW!

WE'VE BEEN FEEDING HER MUCH MORE NUTRITIOUS FOOD, AND SHE'S BEEN GROWING HEALTHIER BY THE DAY!

THAT MUST BE DIFFICULT FOR YOU ALL.

OH, NOT AT ALL! IT'S NOT LIKE SHE'S ACTUALLY ILL OR ANYTHING.

KNOCK KNOCK

ELISE, ARE YOU AWAKE?

AH, ANNE? COME IN!

CREAK

PHEW...

I SEE...

GLASSES

ひょこっ PEEK

I'M SORRY, SIS...

I KNOW I SHOULD'VE GONE TO GREET THE PRINCESS...

I GUESS SHE ALREADY LEFT, HUH?

I WISH I COULD'VE GOTTEN A LOOK AT...

...HER...

SLIP

HUH...?

AH, UMM, I-IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU!

I'M SO SORRY! I'M NOT EVEN DRESSED! YOUR HIGHNESS, I...

ガバッ

FWUMP

WH-

WH-

WHA?!

YOUR SISTER, ANNE, HAS DONE A WONDERFUL JOB AS MY PERSONAL ATTENDANT.

IT'S WONDERFUL TO MEET YOU, ELISE. MY NAME IS MIA LUNA TEARMOON.

BE AM

PLEASE, DON'T STRAIN YOURSELF. RELAX.

RAISE

THAT'S QUITE ALL RIGHT. I'VE HEARD ALL ABOUT YOU, ELISE.

INDEED! I DON'T MIND!

NOT A BIT!

MILADY MIA IS INCREDIBLY UNDERSTANDING! SHE WOULDN'T TAKE OFFENSE AT SOMETHING LIKE THIS.

B-BUT...

LISTEN TO THE PRINCESS, ELISE.

FANCY

MMMH!

I FEEL TERRIBLE FOR EATING YOUR PORTION.

ARE YOU CERTAIN YOU DON'T WANT ONE, ELISE?

OH, THAT'S ALL RIGHT!

TRULY!

THESE ICE CANDIES REALLY ARE DELICIOUS!

SHE'S WONDERFUL...

MY!

WHAT AN INCREDIBLY CONSIDERATE GIRL!

EASILY WON OVER.

I'M AFRAID IT WOULD GIVE ME THE CHILLS.

THOUGH IT PAINS ME TO TURN DOWN A GIFT FROM YOU, YOUR HIGHNESS.

OH?

YOU REALLY HAD THAT MUCH OF AN INTEREST IN ME?

YOU WERE JUST TELLING ME HOW MUCH YOU WANTED TO MEET THE PRINCESS!

ISN'T THIS GREAT, ELISE?

I, UMM... I'VE BEEN WRITING A STORY!

Y-YES!

SHINE

THIS IS MY MANUSCRIPT.

THE POOR PRINCE AND THE GOLDEN DRAGON

...!

SHOCK

IS THIS ...?!

...

THIS STORY... IS TERRIBLY INTERESTING.

HUH?

That was fast...

I SEE NOW... SHE WAS TALKING ABOUT ELISE...

1/10

FLIP

ELISE.

HUH...?

I WANT YOU TO BECOME MY COURT ARTIST.

ME...? YOUR COURT ARTIST?

YES! THAT WAY YOU WILL BE ABLE TO FOCUS ON YOUR WORK WITHOUT NEEDING TO WORRY ABOUT MONEY OR YOUR LIFESTYLE.

HUH?

I BELIEVE YOU STAND MUCH TO GAIN FROM—

BUT WHY? YOU'D BE ABLE TO ACCESS THE GRAND LIBRARY, AND ALL SORTS OF—

UMM... I'D RATHER NOT.

PLEASE DON'T FAVOR ME JUST BECAUSE I'M ANNE'S SISTER!

YOU'RE LYING!

YOU JUST FLIPPED THROUGH THE STORY! YOU CAN'T HAVE READ IT!

MY, BUT I OFFERED YOU THE POSITION BECAUSE I'VE PERCEIVED YOUR TALENT!

ELISE! HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT TO THE PRINCESS?!

I WANT TO SUCCEED AS A STORY-TELLER...

...NOT TO HAVE EVERYTHING HANDED TO ME BECAUSE OF MY SISTER'S INFLUENCE!

ELISE... THERE'S SOMETHING I'D LIKE YOU TO KEEP IN MIND:

I DESPISE LIES.

NOW THEN, AS FOR WHY I LIKED YOUR STORY...

I BELIEVE YOUR PORTRAYAL OF THE PRINCE WAS MOST APPEALING, TO START.

PERSONALLY SPEAKING, I'M MOST FOND OF THE SCENE WHERE THEY CLIMB TO A MOUNTAIN'S PEAK IN SEARCH OF AN HERB THAT NEUTRALIZES POISON...

THE STORY'S PACING IS ALSO REMARKABLY WELL-EXECUTED, AND DRAWS THE READER RIGHT INTO THE ADVENTURE!

I LOVE HOW HE'S EVER-CARING, READY TO OFFER A SMILE TO ANYONE HE HAPPENS TO MEET!

HE HAS A CERTAIN NAIVETY AS WELL, BUT THE WAY THAT CONTRASTS WITH THE DRAGON'S CYNICISM IS QUITE AMUSING!

MIA SPOKE...

...AND SPOKE, AND SPOKE.

OH, AND THE VILLAIN WHO APPEARS TOWARD THE MIDDLE OF THE STORY, SIMON, WAS A WONDERFUL ADDITION!

THE CLIMACTIC DUEL ATOP THE BRIDGE HAD ME ON THE EDGE OF MY SEAT!

HUH...?

I-INCREDIBLE...

YOU READ IT ALL THAT QUICKLY...?

LIKE AN AGING CRITIC GOING OFF ON A SELF-RIGHTEOUS RAMBLE ABOUT THEIR MOST DEEP-SEATED OPINIONS.

BLAH

BLAH

BLAH

BLAH

BLAH

WHAT IS IT?

HM?

UMM, YOUR HIGHNESS?

HOW COME...

...YOU KNOW ABOUT PARTS I HAVEN'T WRITTEN YET?

YAAAH!

MERCIFUL MOONS, I'VE DONE IT NOW!

...I DIDN'T CONSIDER THAT AT ALL!

I WAS HAVING SO MUCH FUN TALKING ABOUT IT...

A REGRETTABLE MISTAKE.

OH, THAT'S NOT SURPRISING AT ALL, ELISE!

OF COURSE THERE WOULD BE MORE TO IT THEN THAN THERE IS NOW!

THAT'S RIGHT! THE STORY I KNOW CAME FROM SEVERAL YEARS DOWN THE LINE!

OH GOD
OH GOD
OH GOD
OH GOD

ANNE'S MIA SYNDROME IS ALMOST AS LATE-STAGE AS LUDWIG'S.

THIS IS PRINCESS MIA WE'RE TALKING ABOUT! OF COURSE SHE COULD READ A FEW CHAPTERS AND GUESS WHERE THE STORY'S GOING TO GO.

...

THERE'S SIMPLY NO WAY SHE WOULD BELIEVE...

AND WHAT "EFFECT" WOULD THAT BE?!

UH...

Y-YES! SOMETHING TO THAT EFFECT!

RIGHT, YOUR HIGHNESS?

はぁぁぁ wooo

おぉ ow

AH, YES. I ALMOST FORGOT SHE WAS ANNE'S SISTER.

CAN SHE, REALLY?!

AND WHEN YOU DO...

...I WANT YOU TO FINISH WRITING THIS STORY.

ALLOW ME TO REITERATE, ELISE.

I WOULD LIKE YOU TO BECOME MY COURT ARTIST.

I'VE NO CHOICE! I'LL JUST HAVE TO RUN WITH THIS STORY!

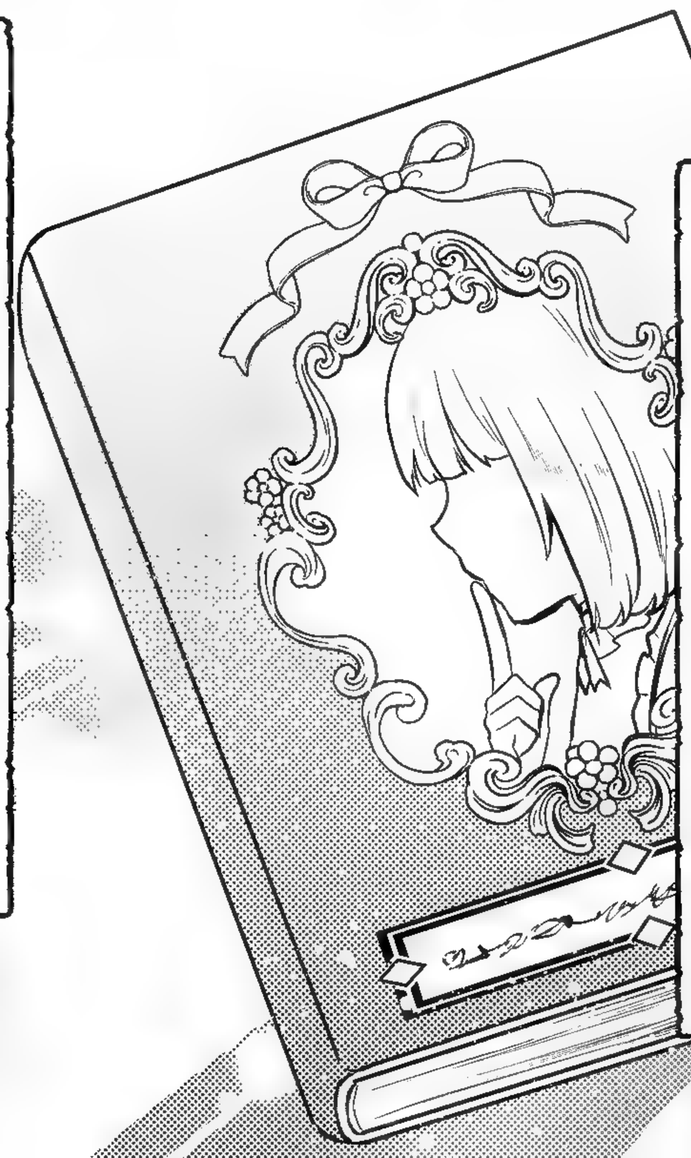
AHEM

...

THANK YOU...
SO MUCH...

AND SO
THE CULT OF MIA
GAINED ANOTHER
ARDENT BELIEVER.

THEIR MEETING
THIS DAY WOULD
BE DEPICTED
WITHIN, ALBEIT
IN A HEAVILY
EMBELLISHED
AND THEATRICAL
FASHION.



ELISE
WOULD
GO ON TO
WRITE A
CERTAIN
BOOK:

THE CHRONICLES
OF SAINT PRINCESS
MIA, A WORK OF
PUREST FANTASY
EXTOLLING
MIA'S VIRTUES
THAT WOULD
INEXPLICABLY
BECOME A BEST
SELLER.

THE SEASONS PASS, AND WINTER ARRIVES.

ANNE?

MIGHT I HAVE A MOMENT?

YES? WHAT IS IT, MILADY?

STARTING NEXT SPRING... I SHALL BE ATTENDING SCHOOL.

AND ALSO...

ANNE.

THANK YOU.

CONGRATU-LATIONS ON YOUR ADMISSION!

YES, I KNOW ALL ABOUT IT!

THE SPRING AFTER NOBLE CHILDREN REACH THE AGE OF 13, THEY'RE SENT OFF TO STUDY AT A SPECIALIZED SCHOOL.

HUH...?

I WOULD LIKE YOU TO COME WITH ME, AS MY PERSONAL ATTENDANT.

UMM...

MILADY, I...

I'M REALLY HAPPY YOU'D ASK ME FOR THIS, BUT ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT ME?

AND I'M... I'M CLUMSY, AND DULL, AND CARELESS, AND...

YOU'LL BE AWAY FROM THE CASTLE FOR YEARS ON END, LIVING IN A SCHOOL DORMITORY.

THE RULES SAY YOU'RE ONLY ALLOWED TO BRING ONE ATTENDANT.

ANNE.

SQUEEZE

ぎゅっ!!

MILADY, PLEASE, MY HANDS MUST BE COLD...

LISTEN TO ME, ANNE.

I AM SAYING I WANT YOU.

WILL YOU...COME WITH ME?

...

MILADY...

I PROMISE TO DO MY VERY BEST.

I'LL SERVE YOU WITH ALL MY HEART AND SOUL, PRINCESS MIA.

ほっ

RELIEF

...

PHEW... THANK THE MOONS. THAT MAKES ONE LESS ANXIETY TO KEEP ME UP AT NIGHT.

NOT HAVING SOMEONE I COULD TRUST AS MY ATTENDANT WOULD BE NOTHING LESS THAN A NIGHTMARE!

AFTER ALL...

TWO OF MY GREATEST ENEMIES AWAIT ME AT THAT SCHOOL!

YOUR TEA, MILADY.

THANK YOU!

TIONA RUDOLVON

SION SOL SUNKLAND

HEH...

SAINT-NOEL ACADEMY, IS IT...?

I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO IT.

Tearmoon Empire

HOME TO THE CENTRAL ORTHODOX CHURCH, A RELIGION OBSERVED ACROSS THE CONTINENT SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL, AND HOST OF A CERTAIN SCHOOL.

THE HOLY PRINCIPALITY OF BELLUGA

SAINT-NOEL ACADEMY

A TRULY ELITE INSTITUTION AT WHICH THE CHILDREN OF THE NEIGHBORING NATIONS' NOBILITY GATHER.

STARTING IN SPRING, MIA WILL SPEND THE NEXT SIX YEARS STUDYING AT THIS ACADEMY.

THIS IS AMAZING!

OH, WOW!

Chapter 5

THE SEA! LOOK, IT'S THE SEA!

THAT WOULD BE A LAKE.

WOOOW! はわ！

B-BUT LOOK!

IT'S REALLY INCREDIBLE, MILADY!

ANNE, PLEASE.

YOU'LL TIRE YOURSELF OUT IF YOU KEEP THAT ATTITUDE UP FOR LONG.

I HAVE TO MAKE AS MANY USEFUL CONNECTIONS AS I CAN, JUST IN CASE WORSE COMES TO WORST AND THE REVOLUTION COMES TO PASS.

BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, I MUST AVOID INTERACTING WITH ANYONE WHO COULD PAVE MY PATH TO THE GUILLOTINE!

I DID SPEND YEARS STUDYING HERE IN THE PREVIOUS TIMELINE.

CLATTER

CLATTER

YOU'RE SO CALM ABOUT ALL OF THIS, AREN'T YOU, MILADY?

WELL, I SUPPOSE...

SIX YEARS...

I'LL HAVE TO MAKE THE MOST OF THIS TIME.

UNDER! ANY! CIRCUM-STANCES!

ESPECIALLY THOSE TWO...

I MUST NOT INTERACT WITH THEM UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES!

HE HAS IT ALL: LOOKS THAT COULD KILL AND A CALM, GENIAL PERSONALITY BOLSTERED BY A STRONG SENSE OF JUSTICE.

SION SOL SUNKLAND

CROWN PRINCE OF THE KINGDOM OF SUNKLAND, A NATION THAT BOASTS A STORIED HISTORY AND INFLUENCE MIGHTY ENOUGH TO RIVAL THE TEARMOON EMPIRE.

HE IS, IN SHORT, THE PERFECT PRINCE AND AN OBJECT OF ADMIRATION FOR ALL THE GIRLS AT SAINT-NOEL ACADEMY. MIA USED TO BE NO EXCEPTION...

SQUEE!

HIS GRADES: EXEMPLARY. HIS SWORDSMANSHIP: SKILLFUL ENOUGH TO SURPASS ALL BUT HIS MOST TALENTED TEACHERS.

THE PREVIOUS TIMELINE

LESS LOVE, MORE DOWNRIGHT ARROGANCE.

ONLY I, PRINCESS OF THE TEARMOON EMPIRE, COULD POSSIBLY SUIT A PRINCE OF HIS CALIBER!

COME ON, THEN! TALK TO ME!

?

FWSH

TIONA!

...

WHO... WHO IS SHE?!

HOW DARE HE IGNORE ME FOR THE LIKES OF HER?!

TIONA RUDOLVON

THE DAUGHTER OF A MINOR NOBLE WHOSE TERRITORY, MADE UP MOSTLY OF FARMLAND, LAY ON THE SOUTHERN FRINGE OF THE EMPIRE...

YOU ARE THE DAUGHTER OF ONE OF MY EMPIRE'S MOST IMPOVERISHED NOBLES, ARE YOU NOT?

...AND THE SUBJECT OF MIA'S BULLYING.

UMM...

HUH?

SCATTER

WHUMP

MIA WOULD CONTINUE TO VENT HER PETTY GRUDGE ON TIONA FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS.

WHATEVER ARE YOU DOING *HERE?*

WERE YOU BROUGHT TO PLOW A FIELD, PERHAPS? YOU'D BEST GET IT DONE AND RUN ON HOME, DON'T YOU THINK?

THAT EXPERIENCE WOULD BE THE DRIVING FORCE THAT PUSHED HER TO THE FOREFRONT OF HISTORY.

OH HO HO HO HO

...

SHE BECAME KNOWN AS A LIVING SAINT, AND IT WAS ON HER COMMAND THAT MIA MET HER END...

TIONA SPOKE ON THE MASSES' BEHALF, GUIDING THEIR RAGE AS A LEADER OF THE REVOLUTION.

HOW TERRIBLY FOOLISH I WAS...

AS THEY SAY, YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW. IT ALL CAME BACK AROUND UPON ME...

YUP YUP YUP YUP YUP

AND THAT'S WHY I MUST NEVER GET ANYWHERE NEAR EITHER OF THOSE TWO!

IF WE'RE NOT EVEN ACQUAINTANCES, THERE'S NO WAY THEY'LL BUILD UP A GRUDGE AGAINST ME!

キラ SPARKLE

OH, WOW...

SPARKLE キラ

OH WOW OH WOW OH WOW

I-I'D BE TOO SCARED TO WALK INTO ANY OF THESE STORES!

HEE HEE! I QUITE AGREE.

BUT ONLY THE MAIN STREET IS LIKE THIS.

THE ACADEMY ALSO RUNS A STORE THAT SELLS MOST DAILY NECESSITIES FOR VERY REASONABLE PRICES.

OH, REALLY?

DON'T WORRY— THERE ARE PLENTY OF STORES THAT CATER TO THE COMMON FOLK WHO LIVE ON THIS ISLAND.

ANNE, I WOULD LIKE YOU TO CONDUCT A SURVEY OF ALL THE STORES IN THIS AREA STARTING TOMORROW.

PLEASE MAKE NOTE OF ALL THE ONES THAT CARRY DECENT-QUALITY ITEMS AT REASONABLE PRICES.

SPEAKING OF WHICH...

WHAT A RELIEF! I'LL HAVE TO BUY MOST OF MY STUFF FROM THERE.

ALL RIGHT! I CAN—

HUH?

PHEW

WHY, OF COURSE THEY ARE! AND YES, SOME EXPENSES ARE NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN THE EMPIRE'S IMAGE.

I THOUGHT YOUR FAMILY WOULD BE SENDING YOU PLENTY OF MONEY FOR THAT SORT OF THING...

B-BUT WHAT ABOUT YOUR ALLOWANCE, YOUR HIGHNESS?

I WOULD FEEL TERRIBLY GUILTY IF I WERE TO SQUANDER THE TAXPAYERS' HARD-EARNED MONEY.

HOWEVER...

TOUCH

...!

SHOCK

YOU'D PRIORITIZE THE COUNTRY OVER YOUR OWN COMFORT AND WELL-BEING...?

YOU'RE INCREDIBLE!

SNIFFLE

Can do!

AS SUCH, I SHALL HAVE HALF OF MY ALLOWANCE SENT TO LUDWIG. I'M SURE HE'LL USE IT WELL.

MILADY...

AFTER ALL, EVERY COIN WASTED IS ANOTHER STEP CLOSER TO THE GUILLOTINE!

INDEED, WASTE MUST NOT BE TOLERATED UNDER ANY CIRCUM-STANCES...

HOOONK!

AND SO ANNE'S DEVOTION GREW STRONGER, IN SPITE OF MIA'S TRUE MOTIVES.

...

?

YOUR HIGHNESS, OVER THERE...

TIONA!

SHE'S...

BAM

GEH!

I JUST HAPPENED TO PASS BY AND GIVE HER THE COLD SHOULDER.

IF MEMORY SERVES, THOSE GIRLS BELIEVED HER SERVANT HAD SLIGHTED THEM AND WERE HARASSING HER FOR IT.

I REMEMBER THIS...

THIS IS JUST LIKE THE FIRST TIME I MET HER!

WHAT SHOULD WE DO, YOUR HIGHNESS?

HMPH!

MY, DO YOU HAVE TO ASK? I THINK IT'S QUITE OBVIOUS.

...HM?

SHUDDER

GLANCE

I JUST SWORE TO STEER CLEAR OF THIS SORT OF DANGER, AFTER ALL!

IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT...

HOW SHOULD WE HELP HER?

SPARKLE

PRINCESS MIA WOULD NEVER OVERLOOK SOMEONE IN NEED OF -HELP!-

HER THOUGHTS ARE WRITTEN ALL OVER HER FACE!

キラ SPARKLE キラ SPARKLE キラ SPARKLE キラ SPARKLE

ええええ EEEK!

UGH!

THAT LOOK IN HER EYES! THE FAITH SHE HAS IN ME!

TO HELP HER ARCH-NEMESIS...

...OR TO LOSE THE TRUST OF HER CLOSEST RETAINER?

Thank you! Drop dead!!!

Milady...

MIA WAS FACED WITH A PIVOTAL DECISION.

ジレンマ

...

7 RESOLVED

ISN'T THAT...?

SIGH

UNFORTUNATELY, EACH NATION'S NOBILITY FESTERS WITH THE SAME ROT AS THE NEXT.

SO IT'S THE SAME HERE TOO, THEN.

...

NOBLES WHO HOLD THE SORT OF PRINCIPLES THAT HIS MAJESTY AND MILORD DO ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN.

CLENCH

I THOUGHT THIS PLACE WOULD BE FULL OF PEOPLE WORTHY TO HOLD A SEAT OF POWER.

THAT MAY BE SO...BUT I EXPECTED BETTER OF SAINT-NOEL ACADEMY.

SION'S ATTENDANT: KEITHWOOD

I COULD NEVER IGNORE A GIRL SUFFERING SUCH ONE-SIDED ABUSE.

OF COURSE.

SO, WHAT'S THE PLAN?

THIS LOOKS LIKE TROUBLE TO ME. WILL YOU HELP THEM ANYWAY?

LET'S GO!

ALL DASH!!

I HAD A FEELING YOU'D SAY THAT, MILORD!

JUST A MOMENT, YOU THREE!

IMPOSING

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?

ISN'T SHE...?

HUH?

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

YOUR...

I AM MIA LUNA TEARMOON, PRINCESS OF THE TEARMOON EMPIRE.

SPARKLE

キラ

YOUR HIGHNESS, PRINCESS MIA!

?!

A PLEASURE TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE.

M-

M-MIA...? YOUR HIGHNESS...? IT COULDN'T BE...

IT IS INDEED.

MY EYES!

はう AUGH!

NOW THEN, ONCE AGAIN...
WHAT, EXACTLY, DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?
HOW DARE YOU FORCE ME TO LEND MY ARCHENEMY A HELPING HAND?!
YOU DESERVE DEATH FOR THIS!
A RAPIDLY SIMMERING FURY.
THE PRINCESS OF THE TEARMOON EMPIRE, EH?
WHAT'S OUR MOVE, MILORD?
...

MILORD?

B-BUT SHE'S...

SHE MAY BE AN IMPERIAL NOBLE, BUT SHE'S AN ***OUTLAND*** NOBLE! A COUNTRY BUMPKIN WHO DOESN'T—

MUST I REPEAT MYSELF?

YOU SEE...

UM...

AH...

WELL...

JOLT

IT SEEMS THAT YOU WERE BEHAVING RATHER RUDELY TOWARD ONE OF MY SUBJECTS.

FROM THE MIGHTIEST OF LORDS TO THE LOWLIEST OF SERVANTS!

I SHALL NOT TOLERATE ANY DISCOURTESY TOWARD A CITIZEN OF THE EMPIRE, NO MATTER WHO THEY MIGHT BE!

I LOVE ALL OF MY SUBJECTS, AND I LOVE THEM EQUALLY.

...!

HMPH...

IN SHORT...

HOW DO YOU LIKE THAT? LET'S SEE YOU TRY AND CRITICIZE ME FOR HELPING YOU!

GLANCE

TMP

TMP

...IS THE MESSAGE MIA INTENDED TO SEND.

"YOU'RE NO DIFFERENT FROM SOME MISERABLE PAUPER IN MY EYES, YOU LITTLE TWIT!"

"I'D EVEN HELP THE LOWLIEST OF SERVANTS IF THEY WERE BEING BULLIED, SO THIS DOESN'T MAKE TIONA SPECIAL!"

I'M STARTING TO

GACHA

WEEP

?!

NOBODY'S EVER TREATED ME AS AN IMPERIAL CITIZEN, MUCH LESS A NOBLEWOMAN...

...

MISS TIONA...

ARE YOU... OKAY?

I THOUGHT THAT I...THAT THE ENTIRE RUDOLVON LINE WOULD NEVER BE ACKNOWLEDGED AS CITIZENS OF TEARMOON.

BUT THEN, STARTING THE VERY FIRST DAY, IT WAS THE SAME OLD HARASSMENT AS EVER...

NO MATTER HOW HARD I WORK, NOBODY ACKNOWLEDGES ME.

THAT'S WHY I STUDIED MY HEART OUT TO GET INTO SAINT-NOEL ACADEMY— JUST TO PROVE THEM WRONG.

PANIC PANIC

PERHAPS I WENT A LITTLE TOO FAR AS WELL!

STOP CRYING? PLEASE?

SO, UMM...

...AND CALLED ME ONE OF HER PEOPLE, JUST LIKE THAT.

FLOUNDER

FLOUNDER

BUT THEN **SHE** ARRIVED...

UMM!

AH, ERR...

THAT IS...

...SHE PROTECTED ME, AND SAID SHE LOVED ME AS ONE OF HER OWN.
PETTY, POWERLESS, AND UNIMPORTANT THOUGH I AM...
THE FACT THAT MIA'S INTENDED MESSAGE DIDN'T GET THROUGH HAS FLOWN ENTIRELY OVER HER HEAD.
I-IS ONE SARCASTIC QUIP ALL IT TAKES TO MAKE HER CRY?!
I WAS NOT EXPECTING THIS!
GAAAH
ERR...
UMM...
GRAB

SLAP

WIPE YOUR FACE WITH THIS!

HERE!

HOVER

RETREAT

ZOOM!

...

RUMOR HAS IT SHE ARRANGED FOR A HOSPITAL TO BE BUILT IN A SLUM.

SO I'VE HEARD, AND I'VE BEEN HOPING TO MEET HER EVER SINCE, BUT...

THAT WAS PRINCESS MIA? THE ONE THEY CALL THE WISDOM OF THE EMPIRE?

TRULY?

I WAS SURE SHE'D BE A SHELTERED GIRL WHO DIDN'T KNOW HER GOLDS FROM HER COPPERS...

...OR THAT SHE'D HAVE FAR MORE COMPASSION THAN SENSE.

THAT IS AN ESSENTIAL QUALITY FOR THOSE WHO RULE OVER OTHERS.

WHEN FACED WITH INJUSTICE, SHE RESPONDED WITH RIGHTEOUS FURY.

WHAT, EXACTLY, DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?

SHII PPP

INE PPP

HER WISDOM AND RIGHTEOUSNESS MAKE HER A WORTHY SUCCESSOR TO THE IMPERIAL LINE. OF THAT, THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT.

MERE COMPASSION ISN'T ENOUGH TO DRIVE ONE TO INTERVENE IN TROUBLING MATTERS AND DENOUNCE EVIL.

JUST AS THE MISDEEDS YOU INFLICT UPON OTHERS WILL SURELY BE REPAID IN KIND...

EVEN IF HER FRIENDSHIP IS ALL I GAIN FROM SAINT-NOEL, COMING HERE WILL STILL HAVE BEEN WORTHWHILE.

...SO TOO WILL SOWING THE SEEDS OF BENEVOLENCE BRING ABOUT A HARVEST OF GOODWILL. THOUGH MIA, OF COURSE, HAS YET TO APPRECIATE THAT FACT.

Your Highness!

Tearmoon Empire

Side Story

...I BELIEVE I'VE OUTLINED MY PROPOSAL FOR THE EMPIRE'S FINANCIAL REFORM IN FULL.

AND WITH THAT...

THANK YOU, LUDWIG...

EXHAUSTED

Y-YES... MARVELOUS...

NOT THAT I WAS THINKING AT ALL PAST THE THIRTY-MINUTE MARK.

...!

NO... I'VE SIMPLY GIVEN MYSELF A HEADACHE. ALL THAT THINKING, YOU SEE. PAY IT NO MIND.

AH.

*HOW IN THE MOONS CAN THAT FOUR-EYES TALK FOR **TWO HOURS** WITHOUT REST...?*

YOUR HIGHNESS, IS SOMETHING WRONG?

DROOP

LUDWIG'S GLASSES REMAIN CLOUDED TO THE TRUTH.

PRINCESS MIA, A WOMAN WHOSE INTELLECT FAR SURPASSES MY OWN, HAS THOUGHT HARD ENOUGH TO GIVE HERSELF A **HEADACHE?**

ALL FOR THE SAKE OF THE EMPIRE'S FUTURE?!

IT IS NOT.

IS IT NOT A GIVEN THAT WHEN YOU'RE TIRED, WHEN YOU HAVE THINKING TO DO, OR WHEN YOUR FOUR-EYED ADVISOR WON'T LEAVE YOU ALONE, SWEETS ARE THE ONLY SOLUTION?

UGH... I WANT SWEETS...

YES. THIS WILL BE A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN OF MATTERS IN THE SURROUNDING NATIONS.

OH? AND WHAT SORT OF GOODS DOES THIS MERCHANT DEAL IN?

A MERCHANT?

RUSTLE

MY APOLOGIES FOR CARRYING ON FOR SO LONG.

IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I HAVE PLANS TO MEET WITH A TRAVELING MERCHANT NEXT.

CONFECTIONERY!

A WIDE VARIETY OF CONFECTIONERY FROM ALL ACROSS THE LAND, TO MY UNDERSTANDING.

TAKE THIS...

HI

VO

SQUEEZE

A FAVOR? WHAT IS IT?

IS THAT SO...?

IN THAT CASE, MIGHT I ASK A FAVOR OF YOU?

THIS IS... A FULL GOLD!

ENOUGH MONEY TO BUY UP A MERCHANT'S ENTIRE SHIPMENT— HORSE, CARRIAGE, AND ALL!

GLANCE

...AND USE IT TO BUY SOMETHING FROM THE MERCHANT FOR ME WHILE YOU MINGLE.

...?

YOU MAY USE WHAT IS LEFT OVER HOWEVER YOU SEE FIT.

HOLY-

!!

Keep the change. Her Highness wishes you safe travels.

STRONGER THAN THAT OF ANY OTHER NATION! IT ALL MAKES SENSE NOW!

SHE'S TELLING ME TO USE THIS TO FORGE A BOND OF TRUST WITH THE MERCHANT!

WAIT...OF COURSE!

"USE WHAT IS LEFT OVER HOWEVER YOU SEE FIT"!

MIA SIMPLY MISJUDGED THE VALUE OF MONEY.

WORRIED

SURELY IT WILL SUFFICE FOR AT LEAST A PACKET OF COOKIES...?

MY... WAS THAT NOT ENOUGH, PERHAPS?

MARVELOUS! I SHALL LOOK FORWARD TO IT.

SWEETS FROM ALL AROUND THE WORLD! I CAN HARDLY WAIT!

LEAVE IT TO ME, YOUR HIGHNESS.

I SHALL RETURN WITH YOUR CONFECTIONERY SHORTLY.

OH, GOOD! ALL SEEMS WELL AFTER ALL.

HUM

ANY MINUTE NOW, I'M SURE! ANY MINUTE NOW!

HUM

OHO HO HO HO!

OH, IS THAT SO? LUDWIG'S COMING...

...HERE...

INDEED! IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE MY SWEE— AHEM!

BEFORE LUDWIG ARRIVES TO PAY ME A VISIT.

ARE YOU WAITING FOR SOMETHING, MILADY?

WHY DOES ANNE ALWAYS GET SO WORKED UP AT THE STRANGEST THINGS?!

ANNE'S OBSESSION WITH LOVE SHOWS NO SIGN OF FADING.

NO NEED! I SAW HIM JUST A MOMENT AGO!

NO TIME TO WASTE!

WE HAVE TO DRESS YOU UP, MILADY! NOW!

SPARKLE

SPARKLE

SPARKLE

MARVELOUS! TRULY MARVELOUS!

SPARKLE

SPARKLE

MY!

CLICK

EXCUSE ME!

NOT AT ALL!

I SIMPLY PUT IN A GOOD WORD. THE CREDIT IS ALL YOURS...

THE MERCHANT WAS THANKFUL BEYOND MEASURE.

I'M CONFIDENT THAT THE EMPIRE HAS GAINED A VALUABLE ALLY TODAY.

OH, THANK YOU, ANNE!

I'VE BROUGHT TEA, YOUR HIGHNESS!

OH? IT WENT OVER THAT WELL?

YOUR TALENT FOR NEGOTIATIONS IS ASTONISH-ING, LUDWIG.

TMP

AH!

WHICH SHALL I SAMPLE FIRST...?

TREMBLE わく

TREMBLE わく

THIS COULD END POORLY...

CLATTER カタ

CLATTER カタ

ニコッ

EEEK!

TUMBLE

YOUR HIGHNESS, WATCH OUT!

TING

LEAP

CLOSE

!!!

AH

MILADY, ARE YOU HURT...?

I-I'M SO SORRY! I'VE DONE IT AGAIN!

わぱ

BWUH

AND FACE-FIRST, AT THAT...

WHY DOES SHE LOOK SO TRIUMPHANT?

IT WILL BE SOME TIME BEFORE ANNE'S MISUNDER-STANDING IS FINALLY RESOLVED.

APPROVAL!

YOU'VE GOT THIS, MILADY!

Short Story

With the Right Connections, Anything's Possible!

With the Right Connections, Anything's Possible!

Let us cast our gaze back to the previous timeline, to the era in which the Tearmoon Empire was slowly teetering across the brink of its inevitable demise, brought about by a seemingly never-ending famine.

It was under those conditions that Ludwig, a youthful government official, paid Mia a visit at the Whitemoon Palace. After offering a perfunctory greeting, he cut to the chase and passed Mia a sheet of paper.

"This, Your Highness, is a list of influential individuals who attended Saint-Noel during the same period you did," explained Ludwig. "If there is anyone among their number who would be willing to lend you aid, I believe it would behoove us to seek them out."

"Hmm, hmm..." mumbled Mia as she scanned Ludwig's list—or rather, as she pretended to do so. In truth, Ludwig's efforts to prepare a simple, easily readable list were wasted. Mia didn't recognize so much as a single name upon it.

"So, Your Highness," pressed Ludwig, "do you believe any of these people would provide food for the empire if we were to request it?"

Unfortunately, there were no convenient stockpiles of food to be found. Every potential source of aid had been petitioned long ago. Moreover, the famine had hit the empire's neighboring nations

just as harshly as it had the empire itself, and there was little hope they would spare what few resources they had access to. As if that weren't bad enough, the empire's finances had long since collapsed. A lack of supply and excess of demand had inflated the cost of food so dramatically that buying the nation's way out of the famine was entirely off the table.

Thus, Ludwig's final spark of hope lay in Princess Mia's personal connections. Saint-Noel Academy gathered together noble children from all across the land, and Mia had spent several years studying there. Surely the princess had made *some* connections over the course of her time there, and there was an ever-so-small chance that one or more of those powerful individuals would throw the empire a lifeline in the hopes of calling in the favor when the nation rose back to prominence.

There was also a slim chance that she knew someone from a land so far-flung they wouldn't know of the empire's state of affairs at all, and could perhaps be convinced to send food before the promises the empire offered in exchange were found to be hollow. As far as last resorts went, it wasn't an especially compelling one, but the situation was dire enough that Ludwig truly had nowhere else to turn. The empire's death rattle was already echoing in his ears...and it was about to get a lot louder.

"You...do not? Not even a single one?"

"I-I'm afraid none of these names sound familiar at all..." Mia timidly replied, certain she was about to get another sarcastic tongue-lashing. To her surprise, though, Ludwig simply shook his head as his shoulders slumped with disappointment.

"I suppose I should have seen this coming." Ludwig sighed. His dejection was apparent at a glance, and Mia found the shift in attitude just a little alarming.

"I'm, umm, terribly sorry about that," she stammered. "I do wish I could live up to your expectations."

"Hmph!" snorted Ludwig. "I never expected anything from you in the first place, *Your Highness*, so there is no need to let it bother you. I simply thought that if you had any connections to speak of, they would make my job easier. I have been aware of your uselessness for long enough that it no longer surprises me. It was my fault for thinking for even a moment that you could *help*."

Ludwig's expression had done a sudden and complete about-face, becoming a scathing sneer. The tired look of resignation that had worried Mia so much was now nowhere to be seen.

"Wha?! How *dare*—"

"Now then, I must be on my way. I shall return if another option comes to mind," said Ludwig with a transparently insincere bow before departing without another word.

As Mia watched him leave, she let out a long, pained sigh. "Truly, that man's rudeness knows no bounds! 'I shall return,' he claims. Why, I wouldn't be surprised if he plans to abandon us and flee the country on his own!"

In spite of the venom she spewed at him, Mia never really doubted Ludwig for so much as a second. She'd seen that process play out plenty of times, of course. One after another, her aides would say, "I'd like to take some time off," or "See you tomorrow, Your Highness," and simply vanish, never to be seen or heard from again. Not one of them ever returned to her side.

But amid all that turnover, Ludwig alone never vanished. Insufferable though he was, he was also the only one of Mia's advisors who never abandoned her. He'd tell her "I'll return" time after time, and not once had it proven insincere. That was why, in spite of everything, Mia trusted him more than anyone else.

She didn't *like* him, of course, but trust and affection do not necessarily have to go hand in hand.

"He'd better enjoy this while he can! I'll put him in his place one of these days; I swear it!" Mia muttered bitterly, idly picking up the list that Ludwig had left behind. Then she began transcribing the names upon it into her diary's last page, one by one. She'd learned from painful experience that she would come to regret it if she failed to do so.

Once, Mia had gone to meet with the princess of a neighboring country, only to fail to recognize her when they finally met face-to-face. It was a disgrace that did not bear repeating, and ever since, whenever Ludwig mentioned a name, she took great care to record it in her diary and memorize it for future reference. Where genuine social skills failed, rote memorization would do the trick! Mia hoped that someday the chance would come for her to nonchalantly reveal her hard-earned knowledge and give Ludwig the shock of a lifetime.

"Hee hee hee! Oh, how astonished he'll be when he realizes how much I've learned!" Mia muttered with a malicious smirk as she scribbled names into her diary.

In the end, however, that day would never come to pass. Barely a month later, a certain incident would stoke the smoldering embers of revolution into a raging inferno that consumed the empire in the blink of an eye. And when the flame of Mia's own life was snuffed out by the blade of the guillotine, all hope of her memorization proving its worth seemed lost for all time.

Time, however, has a way of proving itself more mutable than one might expect...

"Your Highness! Please, come in!"

Let us now cast our minds to a chilly winter's day.

Ludwig was busy at work in his office. Having found an unexpected patron in the form of Mia Luna Tearmoon, the emperor's beloved daughter, his superiors had suddenly found themselves much more inclined to listen to his advice. Slowly but surely, his proposed policies were being put into action.

It was a small step toward the empire's financial reform, to be sure, but it was leagues better than the frustrating standstill he'd been faced with previously. Now that the wheels were in motion, he just had to keep them spinning in the right direction. All that is to say that he was more than a little busy—but when the aforementioned patron, Mia, arrived for a sudden and unannounced visit, he dropped everything to recieve her.

"You needn't have made the trip, you know. I would've come to see you if you'd summoned me," said Ludwig, but Mia simply sat down in the chair he kept around for visitors and shook her head.

"Your work is important, and I wouldn't dream of interrupting it more than necessary. Besides, it would seem terribly unfair to call *you* over for the sake of *my* business," replied Mia.

"On that subject, what brings you here today?" asked Ludwig.

"To begin with, there's this," Mia began, pulling out a single piece of parchment. It was a list—a list of names.

"And what am I supposed to do with this...?"

"I would like you to look into all of the individuals I've written upon it," replied Mia.

"Foreign nobility..." Ludwig muttered as some of the names instantly caught his eye. "And royalty, at that... Your Highness, could it be that all of these individuals attend Saint-Noel?"

"Oho ho ho! An astute guess. That is precisely correct—these are the names of my fellow students."

Ludwig's eyes narrowed as the cogs in his mind began to spin.

"And when you say you'd like me to investigate them, I take it you mean...?"

"Oho ho ho, no need to bother phrasing it so diplomatically! Simply put, I am hoping to bolster my interpersonal relationships."

Saint-Noel Academy... Ludwig knew very well that the children of aristocrats, royalty, and prosperous merchants from all across the continent would be gathered there. It was a school that only a chosen few could attend, and it was clear that the princess before him knew exactly what the most important boon she could hope to gain from such a place was. Ludwig found himself cracking a grin.

"I see now... Yes, I understand perfectly. I shall see to it at once."

And after Mia went on her way, that is precisely what he did. As he worked through her list, though, Ludwig soon found himself cocking his head in confusion.

"Why would she choose *these* people?" he wondered aloud. The individuals on Mia's list were an eclectic bunch: princes of nations just far enough away from Tearmoon to feel remote, the children of merchant companies too small to be of *real* note, and even nobles from truly far-flung and impoverished lands... In the end, not even one of them struck Ludwig as the sort of person one would aspire to forge a connection with.

"This is Princess Mia, though. She must have some sort of reason to seek them out in particular..."

After a short break, Ludwig went back to poring over all the documents on Mia's targets he could get his hands on. This time, however, he looked deeper than the surface level. And, in forcing himself to keep a broader perspective, he realized something.

"Yes, I see now... Of course! It all seems so obvious! The broadness of Princess Mia's consideration truly puts my narrow mind to shame..."

The logic, in short: when Ludwig thought of valuable interpersonal connections, his mind jumped to the princess of Perujin Agricultural Country—from which the Tearmoon Empire imported a vast quantity of food—or the prince of the Kingdom of Sunkland, or perhaps the Holy Lady of the Principality of Belluga. Essentially, he thought of people connected to large, influential, and nearby nations.

When he thought a little deeper about it, though, the obvious struck him: of *course* Mia would have already made contact with all of *those* people! Forging ties with *them* was surely the first thing she'd done! No, Mia was reaching beyond those obvious first steps. She was reaching for the sort of connections one wouldn't immediately think to acquire—the sort of friends one could *only* make at an academy like Saint-Noel.

Yes, thought Ludwig, *those from neighboring nations would be relatively easy to meet with. There was no particular need for the princess to spend her time at Saint-Noel deepening those relations. Why* wouldn't *she set her sights on the sort of people she'd never get the chance to meet outside of the school instead?*

A shiver raced down Ludwig's spine the instant he found that new perspective. "This country..." he muttered, once again peering at his papers. "It's far from the empire, yes, but...incredible. It could hardly be in a more perfect location!"

Just because a nation did not share a border with the empire—just because a nation lay far afield—did not necessarily make it unworthy of the empire's cooperation. In fact, the farther away a country was, the less likely it was to be invested in the interests of the empire's neighbors. That meant that more far-flung nations could very well be *more* likely to lend the empire aid in a time of crisis, assuming good relations could be established. And while the

nation Mia had chosen was certainly far away, it was juuust close enough to offer that very sort of assistance. It was truly situated the perfect distance away.

"And this family with the impoverished territory... They may be destitute now, but a vein of valuable ore was discovered in their lands! As long as the excavation goes well..."

A nation's poverty, after all, was not guaranteed to last. Mia was clearly looking for connections that could prove useful years down the line—*decades*, even! Long after she would graduate from school, that was for certain.

"I can't just look at these people's current standing. I have to find whatever information I can that will let us guess where they *will* stand a decade down the line! *That* must be what Princess Mia wants from me!"

Ludwig had finally convinced himself. Mia hadn't ordered him to conduct a simple, everyday investigation. No, she had ordered him to anticipate the flow of history and compile a list of the individuals who *would* prove helpful far in the future!

No, that can't be all there is to it. By giving me this list, the princess showed me that she was already *doing just that! Was she simply asking me to join in her efforts?*

Ludwig felt himself break out in goosebumps. "The future... A decade down the line... I've been fixated upon solving the problems immediately before me. Was she trying to tell me to take the future into consideration and plan accordingly...?"

Suddenly, a thought flashed through Ludwig's mind. He knew it may not have been *precisely* what Mia was getting at, but it was the one and only ambition he could imagine that she might have difficulty making a reality on her own.

"What if we were to make Princess Mia the first empress of Tearmoon? To ensure she has the freedom to use her talents to the fullest? What could I do to make that happen...?"

Ludwig's vision, the goal he would strive towards, was beginning to grow clearer. All that was left was to quietly but resolutely set out in pursuit of it.

With all that said, let us finally return to Mia herself. The princess sighed with relief as she strolled into her chambers, blissfully unaware of the conclusions Ludwig was jumping to at that very moment.

"Thank the moons... I do believe he didn't suspect a thing!"

Mia's bloodstained diary lay open on the bed nearby, turned to one of its later pages. There was the list of important individuals that Ludwig had once handed her, faithfully transcribed in full. And not just once—upon closer inspection, one would realize that all the names on that list had been written down over and over and over again.

Indeed, in her quest to engrave all those names into the deepest reaches of her mind, Mia rewrote them all within her diary ten times, every single day! And as far as brute-force memorization methods went, that would have been all well and good...

"Hmm... No, I simply can't remember, no matter how many times I look at it! Who *are* these people?"

...were it not for the princess's own nature sabotaging her best efforts. She had memorized the names on the list, yes, but that was *all* that she had memorized. *Just* the names. No context, no explanations, and nothing even remotely capable of clueing her into their identities.

Her own research had proven that some of them were influential figures in nearby countries easily enough, but the rest of their inclusions defied all explanation no matter how hard she tried to pin them down. Not that she had tried very hard, mind you—one day of research was all it had taken to make her throw her hands in the air and pass the task off to Ludwig.

"That accursed four-eyes brought me the list in the first place, so having him handle it will be the quickest solution anyway!" Mia muttered, kicking herself upright with an undignified grunt. "But in any case... Yes, making connections is important indeed. I can't let that four-eyes lecture me like that again, after all!"

Mia was, in her own sort of way, brimming with enthusiasm to make the most of what she'd learned in the previous timeline.

"My first objective: prevent the revolution that overthrows Tearmoon! Everything else should work out as long as that goes well. And if having connections will help me accomplish that goal, then I'll simply have to make some!"

Mia folded her arms, her expression turning grave. "But I can't just assume that preventing the revolution will go smoothly. That would be far too risky, and it will surely not be that easy. I'll need a backup plan, and a backup plan for that backup plan... And if worse comes to worst and the revolution *does* come to pass, I'll need a way to make my escape."

Making influential friends in the empire's neighboring countries wouldn't be enough for that purpose. If Mia was going to flee the country, she'd have to flee *far* away, and that meant making friends in far-off nations she could count on when the chips were down.

"In any case, I need more connections! With the right connections, anything will be possible!"

And so the flame of ambition burned bright within Mia's breast as her life at Saint-Noel Academy began. As for who she really would meet, and what connections she would make...for the moment, those answers will have to remain a mystery.

Tearmoon Empire

♦ Afterword ♦

Congratulations on the publication of this manga!

This is the author of the original novels, Nozomu Mochitsuki.

Maybe I shouldn't admit this, but to tell the truth, after I learned that my work would be receiving a manga adaptation (a personal first for me), I ended up getting so preoccupied envisioning Mia being swept along by her circumstances that the volume's release entirely snuck up on me!

I have to say, the power of manga is mighty indeed. Even though I'm the one who wrote the story, just seeing the preliminary sketches for some of the scenes in this volume nearly moved me to tears.

Thank you very much for bringing Mia and all the other characters to life in such an adorable way, Ms. Morino!

And finally, thank you to all the readers who've decided to give this manga a try. I hope you'll enjoy Mia's trials and tribulations!

Nozomu Mochitsuki

Thank you very much for picking up this manga!

I drew this story hoping to make a version that fans of the original work could enjoy, but readers who haven't read the novels could still easily understand. I'd be happy if those who haven't tried the original develop an interest in it thanks to this manga as well!

Personally, I loved the scathing wit of the novel's narrator so much, I couldn't help but sneak a few of their lines into the manga here and there. I hope you'll appreciate them as much as I did!

Finally, I hope you'll continue to follow Mia's journey and enjoy how her abundance of expressions come to life in manga form!

モリの。
Morino.

TEARMOON EMPIRE (MANGA) VOLUME 1
by Nozomu Mochitsuki (story) and Mizu Morino (artwork)
Original character designs by Gilse

Translated by Tristan K. Hill
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